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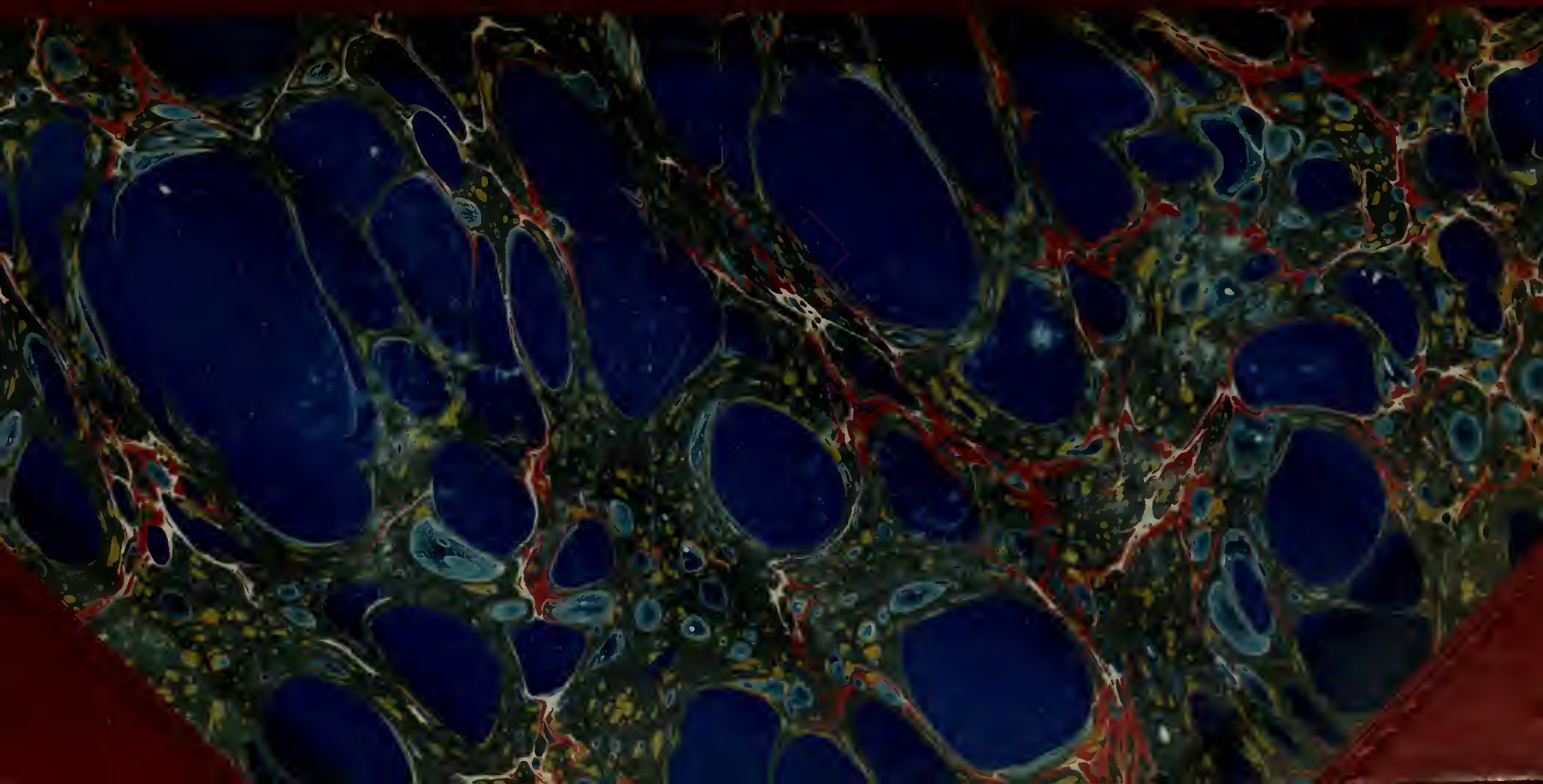

M. ELLEN EDWARDS. J. SWAIN.

ROSALINE.

"Laden with Golden Grain."

THE

ARGOSY.

EDITED BY

MRS. HENRY WOOD.

VOLUME XXI.

January to June, 1876.

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THE ARGOSY.

JANUARY, 1876.

EDINA.

By Mrs. HENRY WOOD, Author of "East Lynne."

CHAPTER I.

HEARD AT MIDNIGHT.

THE village was called Trennach; and the scene about it was bleak and bare and dreary enough, though situated in the grand old county of Cornwall. For, mines lay around, with all the signs and features of miners' work: yawning pit mouths, leading down to their rich beds of minerals—some of the mines in all the bustle of full operation, some worked out and abandoned. Again, surrounding these, might be seen miners' huts, and other dwelling-places. The little village of Trennach skirted this tract of labour: for, while the mining district extended for some miles on the one side the hamlet; on the other side, half an hour's gentle walking brought you to a different-looking land altogether—to trees, and pasture land, and luxuriant vegetation.

The village street consisted chiefly of shops. Very humble shops, most of them: but the miners and the other inhabitants, being out of reach of better, found them good enough. Most of the shops dealt in mixed articles, and might be called general shops rather than special ones. The linendraper, for instance, added brushes and brooms to his cottons and stuffs; the grocer sold saucepans and gridirons; the baker did a thriving trade in home-made pickles. On a dark night, the most cheery-looking shop was the druggist's: the four globes, red, green, blue, and amber, displayed in its windows, sending forth their colours on the faces of the passers-by, and tingeing the puddles in the road. This shop had also added another branch of trade to its legitimate one—that of general literature: for the one doctor of the place dispensed his own medicines, and the sale of the chemist's drugs was not great. The shop boasted of a small circulating library; or

as it was called there, a book-lending club: the miners and the miners' wives were, like their betters, fond of sensational fiction. The books consisted entirely of cheap volumes, sold at a shilling or two shillings each; some indeed at sixpence. The proprietor of this shop, Edmund Float, chemist and druggist, was almost a chronic invalid, and would often be laid up for a week together. The doctor told him that if he would give less of his time to that noted hostelrie, the Golden Shaft, he might escape these attacks of sickness. During their continuance the business of the shop, both as to its drugs and books, was transacted by a young man, a native of Falmouth; one Blase Pellet, who had served his apprenticeship in it and remained on as assistant.

The doctor's name was Raynor. He wrote himself Hugh Raynor, M.D., being a member of the Royal College of Physicians. That he, a man of fair ability in his profession and a gentleman as well, should be content to live in this obscure place, exercising the drudgery of a general practitioner and apothecary, may seem a matter of marvel—but his history shall be given further on. His house stood in the middle of the village, somewhat back from the street-line: a low, square, detached house, with a bow window on either side its entrance, and three windows above. On the door, which always stood open in the daytime, was a brass plate announcing his name, "Dr. Raynor." The bow window to its left was shaded within by a brown wire blind, bearing the word "Surgery" in large white letters. The blind reached about half-way up the window, and Dr. Raynor's white head, or the young head of his handsome nephew, might on occasion be seen over it by the foot passengers, or by Mr. Blase Pellet over the way. For the Doctor's house and the druggist's shop faced each other; and Mr. Pellet, being of an inquisitive disposition, seemed never to tire of peeping and peering into his neighbours' doings generally, and especially into any that might take place at Dr. Raynor's. At either end of this rather straggling street were seated respectively the parish church and the Wesleyan meeting-house. But most of the miners followed their fathers' faith—that of Wesleyan methodist.

It was Monday morning, and a cold bright day in March. The wind came sweeping down the wide street; the dust whirled in the air; but overhead the sun was shining. Dr. Raynor stood by the fire in his surgery—the fire-place being opposite the door—looking over his day-book, in which a summary of the cases under present treatment was entered. He was dressed in black. A tall, grand-looking, elderly man, with a pale, placid face, very quiet in manner, and carefully-trimmed thin white whiskers shading his cheeks. It was eight o'clock, and he had just come into the surgery: his nephew had been in it half an hour. Never was there a more active man in his work than Dr. Raynor had been; up early, and to bed late; but latterly his energy had strangely failed him.

"Has any message come in this morning from Pollock's wife, Frank?" he asked.

"No, sir."

"Then I suppose she's better," remarked the Doctor, closing the book as he spoke, and moving towards the window.

A square table stood at the end of the room, facing the window. Behind it was Frank Raynor, making up mixtures, the ingredients for which he took from some of the various bottles that were ranged in rows upon the shelves behind him. He was a slender, gentlemanly young fellow of four-and-twenty, rather above the middle height, and wore this morning a suit of grey clothes. The thought that passed through a stranger's mind on first seeing Frank Raynor was, how good-looking he is! It was not, however, so much in physical beauty that the good looks consisted, as in the bright expression pervading his well-featured face, and the sunny gladness in his laughing blue eyes. The face lacked one thing—firmness. In the delicate mouth, very sweet and pleasant in form though it was, might be traced his want of stability. He could not say No to a petition, let it be what it might: he might be swayed as easily as the wind. Most lovable was Frank Raynor; but he would be almost sure to be his own enemy as he went through life. You could not help liking him; everybody did that—with the exception of Mr. Blase Pellet across the road. Frank's hair was of a golden brown, curling slightly, and worn rather long. His face, like his uncle's, was close-shaved, save for the whiskers, which were of the same colour as the hair.

"What a number of men are standing about!" exclaimed Dr. Raynor, looking over the blind. "More even than usual on a Monday morning. One might think none of them were at work."

"None of them are," replied Frank. "As I hear."

"No! what's that for?"

Frank's lips parted with a smile. An exceedingly amused look sat in his laughing blue eyes as he answered.

"Through some superstition, I fancy, Uncle Hugh. They say the Seven Whistlers were heard in the night."

Dr. Raynor turned quickly to face his nephew. "The Seven Whistlers!" he repeated. "Why, who says that?"

"Ross told me. He came in for some laudanum for his neuralgia. As there is to be no work done to-day, the overseer thought he might as well lie up and doctor himself. A rare passion he is in."

"Can't he get the men to work?"

"Not one of them. Threats and promises alike fail. There's safe to be an accident if they go down to-day, say the men; and they won't risk it. Bell had better not come in Ross's way while his present temper lasts," added Frank, with a broader smile, as he began to screw a cork into a bottle. "I think Ross would knock him down."

"Why Bell in particular?"

"Because it is Bell who professes to have heard the Whistlers."

"And none of the others?" cried the Doctor.

"Well, I fancy not. Uncle Hugh, what *is* the superstition?—what does it mean? I don't understand: and Ross, when I asked him, went into an explosive fit, instead of answering me. Something ridiculous?"

Dr. Raynor briefly explained. This superstition of the Seven Whistlers arose from certain sounds heard in the air. They were supposed by the miners, when heard—which was very rare indeed, in this neighbourhood—to bode ill luck. Accident, death, all kinds of calamity, in fact, might be looked for, according to the popular superstition, by those who had the misfortune to hear the sounds.

Frank Raynor listened to the Doctor's short explanation, a glow of amusement on his face. It sounded to him like a bit of absurd fun.

"*You* don't believe in any such nonsense, surely, Uncle Hugh!"

Dr. Raynor had returned to the fire, and was gazing straight out before him; some speculation, or perhaps remembrance, or it may be doubt, in his grey eyes.

"All my experience in regard to the Seven Whistlers is this, Frank—and you may make the most of it. Many years ago, when I was staying amid the collieries in North Warwickshire, there arose one morning a commotion. The men did not want to go down the pits that day, alleging as a reason that the Seven Whistlers had passed over the place during the night, and had been heard by many of them. I naturally inquired what the Seven Whistlers might mean, never having heard tell of them, and received in reply the same explanation I have now given you. But workmen were not quite so independent in those days, Frank, as they are in these; and the men were forced to go down the pits as usual."

"And what came of it?" asked Frank.

"Of the going down? This. An accident took place in the pit that same morning—through fire-damp, I think; and many of them never came up alive."

"How dreadful! But that could not have been the fault of the Seven Whistlers?" debated Frank.

"My second and only other experience was here at Trennach," continued Dr. Raynor, passing over Frank's comment. "About six years ago some of the miners professed to have heard these sounds. That same day, as they were descending one of the shafts after dinner, an accident occured to the machinery ——"

"And did damage?" interrupted Frank with growing interest.

"Yes. Three of the men were precipitated to the bottom of the mine, and killed, and several others were injured more or less, some badly. I attended them. You ask me if I put faith in the superstition, Frank. No: I do not. But these experiences that I have told you are facts."

A pause. Frank was recontinuing his work.

"Are the sounds all fancy, Uncle Hugh?"

"Oh no. The sounds are real."

"What do they proceed from? What causes them?"

"It is said that they proceed from certain night-birds," replied Dr. Raynor. "These flocks of birds, in their nocturnal passage across the country, make plaintive, wailing sounds: and when the sounds are heard, they are superstitiously supposed to predict evil to the hearers. Ignorant men are credulous. That is all about it, Frank."

"Did you ever hear the sounds yourself, Uncle Hugh?"

"Never. This is only the third occasion that I have been in any place at the time they have been heard—or said to have been heard—and I have not myself been one of the hearers.—There's Bell!" added Dr. Raynor, perceiving a man leave the chemist's opposite and cross the street in the direction of his house: for the wire blind did not obstruct the view outwards, though it did that, inwards. "He seems to be coming here."

"And Float the miner's following him," observed Frank.

Two men came in through the Doctor's open front door, and thence to the surgery. The one was a little, middle-aged man who carried a stout stick in his hand, and walked somewhat lame; his countenance was not very pleasing at the best of times, and just now it had a grey tinge on it that was rather remarkable. This was Josiah Bell. The one who followed him in was a tall, burly man with a pleasant face; his cheeks were as red as a farm labourer's, his voice was soft, and his manner meek and retiring. The little man's voice was, on the contrary, loud and self-asserting. Bell was given to quarrel with everyone who would quarrel with him; hardly a day passed but he, to use his own words, "had it out" with somebody. Andrew Float had never quarrelled in his life; not even with his quarrelsome friend Bell; but was one of the most peaceable and easy-natured of men. Though only a common miner, he was brother to the chemist, and also brother to John Float, landlord of the Golden Shaft. The three brothers were usually distinguished in the place as Float the druggist, Float the miner, and Float the publican.

"I've brought Float over to ask you just to look at this arm of his, Doctor," began Bell. "It strikes me his brother is not doing what's right for it."

There was a refinement in the man's accent, a readiness of speech, an independence of tone, not at all in keeping with what might be expected from one of a gang of miners. The fact was, Josiah Bell had originally held a better position. He had begun life as a clerk in the office of some large colliery works in Staffordshire; but, partly owing to unsteady habits, partly to an accident which had for many months laid him low and lamed him for life, he had sunk down in the world to be what he now was—a labourer in a Cornish mine.

"What, won't the burn heal?" observed Dr. Raynor. "Let me see it, Float."

"If ye'd please to be so good, sir," replied the big man, with deprecation, as he took off his coat and prepared to display his arm. It had been badly burned some time before; and it seemed to get worse instead of better, in spite of the doctoring of his brother the chemist, and of Mr. Blase Pellet between whiles.

"I have asked you more than once to let me look to your arm, you know, Float," remarked Mr. Frank Raynor.

"But I didn't like to trouble ye, Master Raynor, ye see. I thought Ned and his salves could do for 't, sir."

"And so you men are not at work to-day, Bell!" began the Doctor, as he examined the arm. "What's this absurd story I hear about the Seven Whistlers?"

Bell's aspect changed at the question. The grey pallor on his face seemed to become greyer. It was a greyness that attracted Dr. Raynor's attention: he had never seen it in the man's face before.

"They passed over Trennach at midnight," said Bell, in low tones, from which every bit of independence had gone out. "I heard them myself."

"And who else heard them?"

"I don't know. Nobody—that I can as yet find out. The men were all indoors, they say, before midnight. The Golden Shaft shuts at eleven on a Sunday night."

"You stayed out later?"

"I came on to Float the druggist's when the public-house shut, and smoked a pipe with him and Pellet. It was in going home that I heard the Whistlers."

"You may have been mistaken—in thinking you heard them."

"No," dissented Bell. "It was right in the middle of the Bare Plain. I was stepping along quietly ——"

"And soberly?" interposed Frank, with a twinkling of the eye, and in a tone that might be taken for either jest or earnest.

"And soberly," asserted Bell, resentfully. "As sober as you are now, Mr. Frank Raynor. I was stepping along quietly, I say, when the church clock began to strike. I stood still to count, not believing it could be twelve—for I didn't seem to have stayed twenty minutes at the druggist's. It was twelve, however, and I was still standing stock still after the sound of the last stroke had died away, wondering how it could be so late, when those other sounds broke out high in the air above me. Seven of them: I counted them as I had counted the clock. The saddest sound of a wailing cry I've ever heard—save once before. It seemed to freeze me up."

"Did you hear more?" asked Dr. Raynor.

"No. And the last two sounds of the seven were so faint, I should not have heard them but that I was listening. The cries had broken

out right above where I was standing: they seemed to go gradually away to a distance."

"I say that you may have been mistaken, Bell," persisted Dr. Raynor. "The sounds you heard may not have been the Whistlers."

Bell shook his head. His manner and voice this morning were more subdued than usual. "I can't be mistaken in *them*. Nobody can be that has once heard them, Dr. Raynor."

"Is it the hearing of them which has turned your face so grey?" questioned Frank, alluding to the peculiar pallor noticed by his uncle; but which the elder and more experienced man had refrained from remarking upon.

"I didn't know it was grey," rejoined Bell, his resentful tone cropping up again.

"It's as grey as this powder," persisted Frank, holding forth a delectable compound of ashy-hued stuff he was preparing for some patient's palate.

"And so, on the strength of this night adventure of yours, Bell—or rather of your ears—all you men are making holiday to-day!" resumed the Doctor.

But Bell, who seemed not to approve of Frank's personal remarks on his complexion, possibly taking them to be made only in ridicule—though he might have known Frank Raynor better—stood in dudgeon, his back against the counter, and vouchsafed no reply. Andrew Float took up the word in his humble, hesitating fashion.

"There ain't one of us, Dr. Raynor, sir, that would venture down to-day after this. When Bell come up to the mine this morning, where us men was collecting to go down, and said the Seven Whistlers had passed over last night at midnight, it took us all aback. Not one of us would hazard it after that. Ross, he stormed and he raged, but he couldn't force us."

"And the Golden Shaft will get the benefit of you instead!" said the Doctor.

"Our lives is dear to all of us, sir," was the deprecating reply of Float, not attempting to confute the argument.—"And I thank ye kindly, sir; for it feels more comfortable like. They burns be nasty things."

"They are apt to be so when not properly attended to. Your brother should not have let it get into this state."

"Well, you see, Dr. Raynor, sir, some days he have been bad abed, and I didn't trouble him with it then; and young Pellet, he don't seem to know much about they bad places."

"You should have brought it to me. Bell, how is your wife to-day?"

"Pretty much as usual," said surly Bell. "If she's worse, it's through the Seven Whistlers. She don't like to hear tell of 'em."

"Why did you tell her?"

Josiah Bell lifted his cold light eyes in a sort of wonder. "Could I keep such a thing as that to myself, Dr. Raynor? It comes as a warning of evil, and must be guarded against. That is, as far as we can guard against it."

"Has the sickness returned?"

"For the matter of that, she's always feeling sick. *I* should just give her some good strong doses of mustard-and-water to make her sick in earnest, if it was me, Doctor; and then perhaps the feeling would go off."

"Ah," remarked the Doctor, a faint smile parting his lips, "we are all apt to think we know other people's business best, Bell. Float," added he, as the two men were about to leave, "don't you go in for a bout of drinking to-day. It would do your arm no good."

"Thank ye, sir; I'll take care to be mod'rate," replied Float, backing out."

"The Golden Shaft will have much of his company to-day, in spite of your warning, sir; and of Bell's too," observed Frank as the surgery door closed on the men. "How grey and queer Bell's face looks! Did you notice it, Uncle Hugh?"

"Yes."

"He looks just like a man who has had a shock. The Seven Whistlers gave it him, I suppose. I could not have believed Bell was so silly."

"I hope it is only the shock that has done it," said the Doctor.

"Done what, Uncle Hugh?"

"Turned his face that peculiar colour." And Frank looked up to him, as if scarcely understanding. But Dr. Raynor said no more.

At that moment the door again opened, and a young lady glanced in. Seeing no stranger present, she came forward.

"Papa! do you know how late it is getting? Breakfast has been waiting ever so long."

The voice was very sweet and gentle: a *patient* kind of voice, that somehow imparted the idea that its owner had known sorrow. She was the Doctor's only child: and to call her a *young* lady may be regarded as a figure of speech, for she was past thirty. A calm, sensible, gentle girl she had ever been, of great practical good sense. Her pale face was rather plain than handsome: but it was a face pleasant to look upon, with its expression of sincere earnestness, and its steadfast, truthful dark eyes. Her dark brown hair, smooth and bright, was simply braided in front and platted behind on the well-shaped head. She was of middle height, light and graceful; and she wore this morning a violet merino dress, with embroidered cuffs and collar of her own work. Such was Edina Raynor.

"You may pour out the coffee, my dear," said her father. "We are coming now."

Edina disappeared, and the Doctor followed her. Frank stayed a

minute or two longer to make an end of his physic. He then turned down his coat-cuffs, which had been turned up, pulled his wristbands lower, and also passed out of the surgery. The sun was shining into the passage through the open entrance door; and Frank, as if he would sun himself for an instant in its beams, or else wishing to get a more comprehensive view of the street, and of the miners loitering about it, stepped outside. The men had collected chiefly in groups, and were talking idly, shoulders slouching, hands in pockets; some were smoking. A little to the left, as Frank stood, on the other side the way, was that much-frequented hostelrie, the Golden Shaft: it was evidently the great point of attraction to-day.

Mr. Blase Pellet chanced to be standing at his shop door, rubbing his hands on his rather dirty white apron. He was an awkward-looking, undersized, unfortunately-plain man, with very red-brown eyes, and rough reddish hair that stood up in bristles. When he saw Frank, he backed into the shop, went behind the counter, and peeped out at him between two of the glass globes.

"I wonder what he's come out to look at now?" debated Mr. Blase with himself. "*She* can't be in the street! What a proud wretch he looks this morning!—with his sleek curls shining, and that ring upon his finger!"

"Twenty of them, at least, in front of it, ready to go in!" mentally spoke Frank, his eyes fixed on the miners, standing about the Golden Shaft. "And some of them will never come out all day."

A sudden cry arose, close to Frank. Some little child, in a nightcap and coloured pinafore, had overbalanced itself and fallen in the road. Frank went to the rescue.

"Here we go up!" cried he, in his loving, cheery voice, as he raised the little one, gave it a kiss and a halfpenny, and sent it on its way to Mrs. Stone's sweet-stuff mart, rejoicing. That was Frank Raynor all over: he had many faults, no doubt, but he was full of loving-kindness to old and young, rich and poor.

He went in to breakfast. The meal was laid in a small back parlour, behind the best sitting-room, which was on the opposite side of the passage to the surgery, and faced the street. This small back room looked down on a square yard, and thence to the bare open country: to the mines and to the miners' dwelling-places. They lay to the right, as you looked out. To the left stretched out a bare tract of land, called the Bare Plain—perhaps from its dreary aspect—which we shall come to by-and-by.

Edina sat at the breakfast-table, her back to the window; Dr. Raynor was in the seat opposite to her. Frank took his usual place between them, facing the cheerful fire.

"If your coffee's cold, Frank, it is your own fault," said Edina, handing him his cup. "I poured it out as soon as papa came in."

"All right, Edina: it is sure to be warm enough for me," was the answer, as he took it and thanked her. He was the least selfish, the least self-indulgent mortal in the world; the most easily satisfied. Give Frank Raynor the poorest of fare, and he would never have murmured.

"What a pity it is about the men!" exclaimed Edina to Frank: for this report of the Seven Whistlers had become generally known, and the Doctor's maid-servant had imparted the news to Miss Raynor. "They will make it an excuse for two or three days' drinking."

"As a matter of course," replied Frank.

"It seems altogether so ridiculous. I have been saying to papa that I thought Josiah Bell had better sense. He may have taken more than was good for him last night; and fancied he heard the sounds."

"Oh, I think he heard them," said the Doctor. "Bell rarely drinks enough to obscure his faculties. And he is certainly not fanciful."

"But now, Uncle Hugh," put in Frank, "you *cannot* seriously think that there's anything in it!"

"Anything in what?"

"In this superstition. Of course one can readily understand that a flock of birds may fly over a place by night, as well as by day; and that they may emit sounds and cries on the way. But that these cries should forebode evil to those who may hear them, is not to be comprehended, or believed."

Dr. Raynor nodded. He was languidly eating an egg. For some time past, appetite had failed him.

"I say, Uncle Hugh, that you cannot believe in such a farce. The incidents you gave just now were but accidental coincidences."

"Frank," returned the Doctor, in his quiet tone, that latterly had seemed to tell of pain, "I have already said so. But when you shall have lived to my age, experience will have taught you that there are some things in this world that cannot be fathomed. We must be content to leave them. I told you that I did not myself put faith in this popular belief of the miners: but I related to you at the same time my own experiences in regard to it. I don't judge: but I cannot explain."

Frank turned a laughing look on his cousin. "Suppose we go out on the Bare Plain to-night and listen for the Seven Whistlers ourselves; you and I, Edina?"

"A watched pot never boils," said Edina, quaintly, quoting a homely proverb. "The Whistlers would be sure not to come, Frank, if we listened for them."

CHAPTER II.

ROSALINE BELL.

FRANK RAYNOR had been a qualified medical man for some few years: he was skilful, kind, attentive, and possessed in an eminent degree that cheering manner which is so valuable in a general practitioner. Consequently he was much liked by the Doctor's patients, especially by those of the better class, living at a distance; so that Dr. Raynor had no scruple in frequently making Frank his substitute in the daily visits. Frank alone suspected—and it was only a half suspicion as yet—that his uncle was beginning to feel himself unequal to the exertion of paying them.

It was getting towards midday, and Frank had seen all the sick at present on their hands near home, when he started on his walk to see one or two further off. Calling at home first of all, however, to give Dr. Raynor a report of his visits, and to change his grey coat for a black one. Every inch of a gentleman looked Frank, as he left the house again, turned to the right, and went down the street with long strides. He was followed by the envious eyes of Mr. Blase Pellet: who, in the very midst of weighing out some pounded ginger for a customer, darted round the counter to watch him.

"He is off *there*, for a guinea!" growled Mr. Pellet, as he lost sight of Frank and turned back to the ginger. "What possesses Mother Bell, I wonder, to go and fancy herself ill and in need of a doctor!"

The houses and the church, which stood at that end of Trennach, were soon left behind; and Frank Raynor was on the large tract of land which was called the Bare Plain. The first break he came to in its monotonous bleakness was a worked-out pit, or mine, on the left hand. This old pit was encompassed about by mounds of earth of different heights, where children would play at hide-and-seek during the daylight; but not one of them ever approached close to the mouth of the shaft. Not only was it dangerous in itself, being entirely unprotected, and children, as a rule, are given to run into danger rather than to avoid it; but the place had an evil reputation. Some few years back, a miner had committed suicide there: one Daniel Sandon: had deliberately jumped in to destroy himself. Since then, the miners and their families, who were for the most part very superstitious and very ignorant, held a belief that the man's ghost haunted the interior of the pit—that on a still night, anyone, listening down the shaft, might hear his sighs and groans. This caused it to be shunned: hardly a miner would venture close to it alone after dark. There was nothing to take them near it, for it lay some

little distance away from the broad path that led through the middle of the Plain. The depth of the pit had given rise to its appellation, "The Bottomless Shaft": and poor Daniel Sandon must have died before he reached the end. For anyone falling into it, there could be no hope: escape from death would have been an impossibility.

Frank Raynor passed it without so much as a thought. Continuing his way, he came by-and-by to a cluster of miners' dwellings that lay away on the Plain to the right. Not many: the miners chiefly lived on the other side the village, near the mines. Out of one of the most commodious of these houses, there chanced to come a girl, just as he was approaching it; and they met face to face. It was Rosaline Bell.

Never a more beautiful girl in the world than she. Two-and-twenty years of age now, rather tall, with a light and graceful form, as easy in her movements, as refined in her actions as though she had been born a gentlewoman, with a sweet, low voice and a face of delicate loveliness. Her features were of almost a perfect Grecian type; her delicate complexion was fresh as a summer rose, and her deep violet eyes sparkled through their long dark eyelashes. Eyes that, in spite of their brightness, had an expression of fixed sadness in them: and that sad expression of eye is said, you know, never to exist but where its owner is destined to sorrow. Poor Rosaline! Sorrow was on its way to her quickly, even now. Her dress was of some dark kind of stuff, neatly made and worn; her bonnet was of white straw; the pink bow at her throat rivalled in colour the rose of her cheek.

Far deeper in hue did those cheeks become as she recognized Frank Raynor. With a hasty movement, as if all too conscious of her blushes and what they might imply, she raised her hand to cover them, making pretence to push gently back her dark, beautiful hair. Nature had indeed been prodigal in her gifts to Rosaline Bell. She had been brought up well, had received a fairly good education, and profited by it.

"How do you do, Rosaline?" cried Frank, in his gay voice, stopping before her. "Where are you going?"

She let her lifted hand fall. The rich bloom on her face, the shy, answering glance of her lustrous eyes, were beautiful to behold. Frank Raynor admired beauty wherever he saw it, and he very especially admired that of Rosaline.

"I am going in to find my father; to induce him to come back with me," she said. "My mother is anxious about him: and anxiety is not good for her, you know, Mr. Frank."

"Anxiety is very bad for her," returned Frank. "Is she worse to-day?"

"Not worse, sir; only worried. Father heard the Seven Whistlers last night, and that disturbs her."

Frank Raynor broke into a laugh. "It amuses me beyond every-

thing, Rose—those Whistlers. I never heard of them in all my life until this morning."

Rosaline smiled in answer—a sad smile. "Father believes in them firmly," she said; "and mother is anxious because he is. I must go on now, sir, or I shall not get back by dinner-time."

Taking one of her hands, he waved it towards the village, as if he would speed her onwards, said his gay good-bye, and lifted the latch of the house door. The door opened to the kitchen: a clean and, so to say, rather tasty apartment, with a red-tiled floor on which the fire threw its glow, and a strip of carpet by way of hearth-rug. A mahogany dresser was fixed to the wall on one side, plates and dishes of the old willow pattern were ranged on its shelves; an eight-day clock in its mahogany case ticked beside the fire-place, which faced the door. The window was gay with flowers. Blooming hyacinths in their blue glasses stood on its frame half-way up: on the ledge beneath were red pots containing other plants. It was easy to be seen that this was not the abode of a common miner.

Seated in an arm-chair near the round table, which was covered with a red-and-grey cloth, her feet on the strip of carpet, her back to the window, was Mrs. Bell, who had latterly become an invalid. She was rubbing some dried mint into powder. By this, and the savoury smell, Frank Raynor guessed they were going to have pea-soup for dinner. But all the signs of dinner to be seen were three plates warming on the fender, and an iron pot steaming away by the side of the fire.

"And now, mother, how are you to-day?" asked Frank, in his warm-hearted and genuine tone of sympathy, that so won his patients' regard.

He drew a chair towards her and sat down as he spoke. The word "mother" came from him naturally. Two years before, just after Frank came to Trennach, he was taken ill with a fever; and Mrs. Bell helped Edina to nurse him through it. He took a great liking to the quaint, well-meaning, and rather superior woman, who was so deft with her fingers, and ready with her tongue; he would often then, partly in jest, call her "mother"; he called her so still.

Mrs. Bell was seven-and-forty now, and very stout; her short grey curls lay flat under her mob cap; her bright complexion must once have been as delicately beautiful as her daughter's. She put the basin of mint on the table, and smoothed down her clean white apron.

"I'm no great things to-day, Master Frank. Sometimes now, sir, I get to think that I never shall be again."

"Just as I thought in that fever of mine," said Frank, purposely making light of her words. "Why, my good woman, by this day twelvemonth you'll be as strong and well as I am. Only take heart and patience. Yours is a case, you know, that cannot be dealt with in a day: it requires time."

Into the further conversation we need not enter. It related to her

ailments. Not a word was said by either of them about that disturbing element, the Seven Whistlers : and Frank went out again, wishing her a good appetite for the pea-soup.

Putting his best foot foremost, he sped along, fleet as the wind. The Bare Plain gave place to pasture land, trees, and flowers. A quarter of an hour brought him to the Mount—a moderate-sized mansion, standing in the midst of its own grounds, the residence of the St. Clares. By the sudden death of the late owner, who had not reached the meridian of life, it had fallen most unexpectedly to a distant cousin : a young lieutenant serving with his regiment in India. In his absence, his mother had given up her house at Bath, and taken possession of it ; she and her two daughters. They had come quite strangers to the place about two months ago. Mrs. St. Clare—it should be mentioned that they chose their name to be pronounced according to its full spelling, Saint Clare—had four children. The eldest, Charlotte, was with her husband, Captain Townley, in India ; Lydia was the second ; the lieutenant and present owner of the Mount came next ; and lastly Margaret, who was several years younger than the rest, and indulged accordingly. Mrs. St. Clare was extremely fond of society ; and considered that at this place, the Mount, she was no better than buried alive.

The great entrance gates stood on the opposite side ; Frank Raynor never went round to them, unless he was on horseback : when on foot he entered, as now, by the little postern gate that was nearly hidden by clustering shrubs. A minute's walk through the narrow path between these shrubs, and he was met by Margaret St. Clare : or, as they generally called her at home, Daisy. It very frequently happened that she did meet him : and, in truth, the meetings were becoming rather precious to both of them, very especially so to her. During these two months' residence of the St. Clares at the Mount, Mr. Raynor and Margaret had seen a good deal of each other. Lydia was an invalid —or fancied herself one—and the Raynors had been in attendance from the first, paying a visit about every other day. The Doctor went himself now and then, but it was generally Frank.

And Mrs. St. Clare was quite contented that it should be Frank. In this dead-alive spot, Frank Raynor, with his good looks, his sunny presence, his attractive manners, seemed like a godsend. She chanced to know that he was a gentleman by descent, and had met members of his family before : Major Raynor, and old Mrs. Atkinson of Eagles' Nest. She did not know much about them, and in her proud heart she secretly looked down upon Frank : as she would have looked upon any other general practitioner in the medical profession. But she liked Frank himself, and she greatly liked his society, and asked him to dinner pretty often, en famille. The few visitable people who lived within reach did not constitute a large party ; but Mrs. St. Clare got them together occasionally, and made the best of them.

Margaret St. Clare would be nineteen years old to-morrow. A slight-made, light, pretty girl, putting one somehow in mind of a fairy. Her small feet seemed scarcely to touch the ground as she walked, her small arms and hands, her delicate throat and neck, were all perfectly formed. The face was a fair, piquante face, quiet and rather grave when in repose. Her eyes were of that remarkable shade that some people call light hazel and others amber: and in truth they did on occasion look as clear and bright as amber.

She was fond of dress. Mrs. St. Clare's daughters were all fond of it. Margaret's this morning was some fine texture of light blue, that fell in soft folds around her, white lace on the sleeves and round the throat. A thin gold chain, holding a locket, was on her neck. Her hat, its blue ribbons streaming, hung on her arm; her light brown hair was somewhat ruffled by the breeze.

As she came forward to meet Frank, her whole face was lighted up with smiles of pleasure; its blushes were nearly as deep as those that had lighted Rosaline Bell's, not half an hour before.

Frank took both her hands within his in silence. His heart was beating at sight of her: and silence in these brief moments is the best eloquence. Rapidly indeed was he arriving at that blissful state, described by Lord Byron in a word or two, "For him there was but one beloved face on earth." Ay, and arriving also, was he, at its consciousness. Even now it was "shining on him."

She was the first to break the silence. "You are late, Mr. Raynor. Lydia has been all impatience."

"I am a little late, Miss Margaret. There is always plenty to do on a Monday morning."

Lydia St. Clare might be impatient, but neither of them seemed impatient to hurry in to her. The windows of the house could not be seen from hence; clustering evergreens grew high and thick between, a very wilderness. In fact, the grounds generally were little better than a wilderness; the late owner was an absentee, and the place had been neglected. But it seemed beautiful as an Eden to these two, strolling along side by side, and lingering here, lingering there, on this bright day. The blue sky was almost cloudless; the sun gilded the budding trees; the birds sang as they hopped from branch to branch, building their nests: early flowers were coming up; all things spoke of the sweet spring time. The sweet spring time that is renewed year by year in nature when bleak winter dies; but which comes to the heart but once. It was reigning in the hearts of those two happy strollers; and it was in its very earliest dawn, when it is freshest and sweetest.

"Oh, see," said Margaret, stooping, "a beautiful double-daisy, pink-fringed! It has only come out to-day. Is it not very early for them?"

He took the little flower from her unresisting hand as she held it out to him. "Will you give it me, Daisy?" he asked, in a low, tender tone, his eyes meeting hers with a meaning.

Her eyes fell beneath his, her fingers trembled as she resigned the blossom. He had never called her by that pet name before: only once or twice had he said Margaret without the formal prefix.

"It is not worth your having — worth anyone's having," she stammered. "It is only a daisy."

"Only a daisy! It shall be my favourite flower of all flowers from henceforth.

"Indeed I think you must go in to Lydia."

"I am going in. There's a sweep of wind! You will catch cold without your hat."

"I never catch cold, Mr. Raynor. I never have anything the matter with me."

"Could you give me a pin?"

"A pin! Yes"—taking it out of her waistband. "Here's one. What is it for?"

He put the daisy into his button-hole, so that its pink-and-white head just peeped out, and fastened it with the pin. Margaret protested hotly.

"Oh, don't; please don't! Mamma will laugh at you, Mr. Raynor. Such a stupid little flower!"

"Not stupid to me," he answered. "As to laughing, Mrs. St. Clare can laugh at it as much as she pleases: and at me too."

The house was gained at last. Crossing the flagged entrance hall, they entered a very pretty light morning-room, its curtains and furniture of a pale green, bordered with gold. Mrs. St. Clare, a large, fair woman with a Roman nose, lay back in an easy-chair, a beautifully worked screen, attached to the white marble mantlepiece, shading her face from the fire. Her gown was black and white: grey and black ribbons composed her head-dress. She looked half dead with ennui: those large women are often incorrigibly idle and listless: she never took up a needle, she never cared to turn the pages of a book. She was indolent by nature, and she had grown entirely so during her life in India before the death of her husband, Colonel St. Clare.

But her face lighted up to something like animation when Mr. Raynor entered and went forward. Margaret fell into the background. After shaking hands with Mrs. St. Clare, he turned to the opposite side of the fire-place; where, in another easy-chair, enveloped in a pink morning-wrapper, sat the invalid, Lydia.

She was a tall, fair, Roman-nosed young woman too, promising to be in time as large as her mother. As idle she was already. Dr. Raynor said all she wanted was to exert herself: to walk and run, and sake an interest in the bustling concerns of daily life as other girls did; the need talk no more of nervousness and chest-ache then.

Frank felt her pulse, and looked at her tongue, and inquired how she had slept; with all the rest of the usual questioning routine. Lydia answered fretfully, and began complaining of the dulness of her life. It was this wretched Cornish mining country that was making her worse: she felt sure of it.

"And that silly child, Daisy, declared this morning that it was the sweetest place she ever was in!" added Miss St. Clare, in withering contempt, meant for Daisy. "She said she should like existence, as it is just at present, to last for ever!"

Frank Raynor caught a glimpse of a painfully-blushing face in the distance, and something like a smile crossed his own. He took a small phial, containing a tonic, from his pocket, which he had brought with him, and handed it to the invalid.

"You will drive out to-day as usual, of course, Miss St. Clare?" said he.

"Oh, I suppose so," was the careless answer. "I don't know how we should get over the hours between luncheon and dinner without the drive. Not that I care for it."

"Talking of dinner," interposed Mrs. St. Clare, "I want you to dine with us to-day, Mr. Raynor. Is that a *daisy* in your coat? What an absurd ornament!"

"Yes, it is a daisy," replied Frank, looking down on it. "Thank you very much for your invitation. I will come if I can."

"I cannot allow you to say If."

Frank smiled, and gave a twist to the lavender glove in his hand. He liked to be a bit of a dandy when he called at the Mount. As to dining there—in truth he desired nothing better. But he was never quite sure of what he could do until the hour came.

"A doctor's time is not his own, you know, Mrs. St. Clare."

"You must really give yours to us this evening. Our dinners are insufferably dull when we sit down alone."

So Frank Raynor gave the promise—and he meant to keep it if possible. Ah, that he had not kept it! that he had stayed at home! But for that unfortunate evening's visit to the Mount and its consequences, a great deal of this history would not have been written.

The day went on. Nothing occurred to prevent Frank's fulfilling his engagement. The dinner hour at the Mount was seven o'clock. It was growing dusk when Frank, a light coat thrown over his evening dress, started for his sharp walk to it, but not dark enough to obscure objects. Frank meant to get over the ground in twenty minutes: and, really, his long legs and active frame were capable of any feat in the matter of speed. That would give him ten minutes before dinner for a chat with Daisy: Mrs. and Miss St. Clare rarely entered the drawing-room until the last moment.

"Going off to dine again with that proud lot at the Mount!"

enviously remarked Mr. Pellet, as he noted Frank's attire from his usual post of observation, the threshold of his shop door. "It's fine to be him!"

"Blase," called out his master from within, "where have you put that new lot of camomile blows?"

Mr. Blase was turning leisurely to respond, when his quick red-brown eyes caught sight of something exceedingly disagreeable to him: a meeting between Frank and Rosaline Bell. She had come into the village apparently from home: and she and Frank were now halting to talk together. Mr. Blase was splitting with wrath and envy.

He would have given his ears to hear what they were saying. Frank was laughing and chattering in that usual gay manner of his, that most people found so attractive; she was listening, her pretty lips parted with a smile. Even at this distance, and in spite of the fading light, Mr. Blase could see her shy, half-conscious look, and the rose-blush on her cheeks.

And Frank stayed there, talking and laughing with her as though time and the Mount were nothing to him. He thought no harm, he meant no wrong. Frank Raynor never *meant* harm to living mortal. If he had but been as cautious as he was well-intentioned!

"Blase!" reiterated old Edmund Float, "I want to find they new camomile blows, just come in. Don't you hear me? What have you done with them?"

Mr. Blase was utterly impervious to the words. They had parted now: Frank was swinging on again; Rosaline was coming this way. Blase went strolling across the street to meet her: but she, as if purposely to avoid him, suddenly turned down an opening between the houses, and was lost to sight, and to Blase Pellet.

"I wonder if she cut down there to avoid me?" thought he, standing still, in mortification. And there was a very angry look on his face as he crossed back again from his fruitless errand.

Daisy was not alone in the drawing-room this evening. Whether Frank's gossip with Rosaline had been too long, or whether he had not put on as much speed in walking as usual, it was just a minute past seven when he reached the Mount. All the ladies were assembled: Lydia and Daisy in blue silk; Mrs. St. Clare in black satin. Their kinsman had been dead six months, and the young ladies had just put off mourning for him; but Mrs. St. Clare wore hers still.

Daisy looked radiant: at any rate, in Frank's eyes: a very fairy. The white lace on her low body and sleeves was hardly whiter than her fair neck and arms: one white rose nestled in her hair.

"Dinner is served, madam."

Frank offered his arm to Mrs. St. Clare: the two young ladies followed. It was a large and very handsome dining-room: the table, with its white cloth, and its glass and silver glittering under the waxlights,

looked almost lost in it. Lydia faced her mother; Frank and Daisy were opposite each other. He looked well in evening dress: worthy to be a prince, thought Daisy.

The conversation turned mostly on the festivities of the following evening. Mrs. St. Clare was to give a dance in honour of her youngest daughter's birthday. It would not be a large party at the best; the neighbourhood did not afford that; but some guests from a distance were to sleep in the house, and remain for a day or two.

"Will you give me the first dance, Daisy?" Frank seized an opportunity of whispering to her, as they were all returning to the drawing-room together.

Daisy shook her head, and blushed again. Blushed at the familiar word "Daisy," which he had not presumed to use until that day. But it had never sounded so sweet to her from other lips.

"I may not," she answered. "Mamma has decided that my first dance must be with some old guy of a Cornish baronet—Sir Paul Trellasis. — Oh, *going*, do you say! Why? It is not yet nine o'clock."

"I am obliged to go," he answered: "I promised Dr. Raynor. I have to see a country patient for him to-night."

Making his apologies to Mrs. St. Clare for his early departure, and stating the reason, Frank left the house. It was a cold and very light night: the skies clear, the moon intensely bright. Frank went on with his best step. About half-way across the Bare Plain he met Rosaline Bell. The church clock was striking nine.

"Why, Rose! Have you been all this time at Granny Sandon's?"

"Yes; all the time," she answered. "I stayed to help her into bed. Poor granny's rheumatism is very bad: she can scarcely do anything for herself."

"Is her rheumatism bad again? I must call and see her. A cold night, is it not?"

"I am nearly perished," she said. "I forgot to take a shawl with me."

But Rosaline did not look perished. The meeting had called up warmth and colouring to her face, so inexpressibly beautiful in the full, bright moonbeams. A beauty that might have stirred a heart less susceptible than was Frank's.

"Perished, are you!" he cried. "Let us take a dance together, Rose." And, seizing her by the two hands, he danced about with her on the path, in very lightness of spirit.

"Oh, Mr. Raynor, pray don't! I must be going home, indeed, sir. Mother will think I'm lost."

"There! Are you warm now? I must go, also. Just a good-night kiss, Rose."

And before she could resist—if, indeed, she had meant to resist—

Frank Raynor snatched a kiss from the lovely face, released her hands, and went swiftly away over the Bare Plain.

There was not much harm in this: and most assuredly Frank intended none. That has been already said. He was apt to act without thought; to do mad things upon impulse. He admired Rosaline's beauty amazingly, and he liked to talk and laugh with her. He might not have chosen to steal a kiss from her in the face and eyes of Trennach: but what harm could there be when they were alone in the moonlight?

And if the moon had been the sole spectator, no harm would have come of it. Unfortunately, a pair of human eyes had been looking on as well—Mr. Blase Pellet's. After shutting up the shop that night, ill luck had put it into Mr. Pellet's head to take a walk over to Mrs. Bell's. He went in the hope of seeing Rosaline: in which he was disappointed: and was now on his way home again.

Rosaline stood gazing after Frank Raynor. No one but herself knew how dear he was to her; no one ever would know. The momentary kiss seemed still to tremble on her lips; her heart beat wildly. Wrapt in this ecstatic confusion, it was not to be wondered at that she neither saw nor heard the advance of Mr. Pellet; or that Frank, absorbed in her and in the dance, had previously been equally unobservant.

With a sigh, Rosaline at length turned, and found herself face to face with the intruder. He had halted close to her, and was standing quite still.

"Blase!" she exclaimed, with a faint scream. "How you startled me!"

"Where have you been?" asked Blase, in a sullen tone. "Your mother says you've been out for I don't know how many hours."

"I've been nowhere but to Granny Sandon's. Good-night to you, Blase: it is late."

"A little too late for honest girls," returned Blase, putting himself in her way. "Have you been stopping out with *him?*" pointing to the fast-disappearing figure of Frank Raynor.

"I met Mr. Raynor here, where we are standing; and was talking with him for about a minute."

"It seems to me you are always meeting him," growled Blase, suppressing mention of the dance he had seen, and the kiss that succeeded it.

"Do you want to quarrel with me, Blase? It seems so by your tone."

"You met him at dusk this evening as you were going to old Sandon's—if you *were* going there; and you meet him now in returning," continued Blase. "It's done on purpose."

"If I did meet him each time, it was by accident. Do you suppose I put myself in the way of meeting Mr. Raynor?"

"Yes, I do. Come!"

"You shall not say these things to me, Blase. Just because you chance to be a fifteenth cousin of mother's, you think that gives you a right to lecture me."

"You are always out and about somewhere," contended Blase. "What on earth d'ye want at that old Sandon's for ever?"

"She is so sad and lonely, Blase," was the pleading answer, given in a sweet tone of pity. "Think of her sorrow! Poor Granny Sandon!"

"What do you call her 'Granny' for?" demanded Blase, who was in a fault-finding mood. "She's no granny of yours, Rosaline."

Rosaline laughed slightly. "Indeed, I don't know why we call her 'Granny,' Blase. Everybody does.—Let me pass."

"Everybody doesn't.—No: you are not going to pass yet. I intend to have it out with you about the way you favour that fool, Raynor. Meeting him at all hours of the day and night!"

Rosaline's anger was aroused. In her heart she disliked Blase Pellet. He had given her trouble for some time past in trying to force his attentions upon her. It seemed to her that half the work of her life consisted in devising contrivances to repress him.

"How dare you speak to me in this manner, Blase Pellet? You have no right to do it, and you never will have."

"You'd rather listen to the false palaver of that stuck-up gentleman, Raynor, than you would to the words of an honest man like me."

"Blase Pellet, hear me once for all," vehemently retorted the girl. "Whatever Mr. Raynor may say to me, it is nothing to you; it never will be anything to you. If you speak in this way of him again, I shall tell him of it."

She eluded the outstretched arm, and ran swiftly home. Blase Pellet, standing to watch, saw the light within as she opened the door and entered.

"*Is* it nothing to me!" he repeated, in a chap-fallen tone. "You'll find that out before we are a day older, Miss Rosaline. I'll stop your fun with that proud fellow, Raynor."

CHAPTER III.

ON THE BARE PLAIN.

"In vain I look from height and tower,
No wished-for form I see;
In vain I seek the woodbine bower—
He comes no more to me."

So sang Rosaline Bell in the beams of the morning sun. They came glinting through the hyacinths in the window, and fell on the cups and saucers. Rosaline stood at the kitchen table, washing up the breakfast

things. She wore a light print gown, with a white linen collar fastened by a small silver brooch.

An expression of intense happiness sat on her beautiful face. This old song, that she was singing to herself in a low undertone, was one that her mother used to sing to her when she was a child. The words came from the girl half unconsciously; for, while she sang, she was living over again in thought the past night's meeting with Frank Raynor on the Bare Plain.

"Rosie!"

The fond name, called out in her mother's voice, interrupted her. Putting down the saucer, then being dried, she advanced to the staircase door, which opened from the kitchen, and stood there, tea-cloth in hand.

"Yes, mother? Did you want me?"

"Has your father gone out, Rose?"

"Yes. He said he should not be long."

"Oh no, I daresay not!" crossly responded Mrs. Bell; her tone plainly implying that she put no faith whatever in any such promise. "They'll make a day of it again, as they did yesterday. Bring me up a drop o' warm water in half an hour, or so, Rose, and I'll get up."

"Very well, mother."

Rose returned to her tea-cups, and resumed her song; resumed it in very gladness of heart. Ah, could she but have known what this day was destined to bring forth for her before it should finally close, she had sunk down in all the blankness of despair! But there was no foreshadowing of it on her spirit.

"'Twas at the dawn of a summer morn
My false love hied away;
O'er his shoulder hung the hunter's horn,
And his looks were blithe and gay.

"'Ere the evening dew-drops fall, my love,'
He thus to me did say,
'I'll be at the garden gate, my love'—
And gaily he rode away."

Another interruption. Somebody tried the door—of which Rosaline had a habit of slipping the bolt—and then knocked sharply. Rosaline opened it. A rough-looking woman, miserably attired, stood there: an inhabitant of one of the poorest of the dwellings in this quarter.

"I wants to know," cried this woman, in a voice as rough as her words, and with a pronunciation that needs translation for the uninitiated reader, "whether they men be at work to-day?"

"I think not," replied Rosaline.

"There's that man o' mine gone off again to the Golden Shaft, and he'll make hisself bad, as he did yesterday! What the plague does your father go and fill they up with lies about the Whistlers for?

Now then! that's what I'd like to know. If Bell had heered they Whistlers, others 'ud ha' heered they."

"I can't tell you anything at all about it, Mrs. Janes," returned Rosaline, civilly but very distantly; for she knew this class of people to be immeasurably her inferiors, and held them at arms' length. "You can ask my father about it yourself; he'll be here by-and-by. I can't let you in now; mother's just as poorly as ever to-day, and she cannot bear a noise."

Closing the door as she spoke, and slipping the bolt of it, lest rude Molly Janes should choose to enter by force, Rosaline took up her song again.

"I watched from the topmost, topmost height,
Till the sun's bright beams were o'er,
And the pale moon shed her vestal light—
But my lover returned no more."

Whether the men were still incited by a dread of the supposed ill-luck that the Seven Whistlers had warned them of, and were really afraid to descend into the mines, or whether they only seized on that pretext to make a second day's holiday, certain it was, that not a single man of them had gone to work. Ross, the overseer, reiterated his threats of condign punishment again and again; and reiterated in vain.

Mr. John Float at the Golden Shaft was doing a great stroke of business these idle days. As many men as could find a seat in his hospitable house took possession of it. Amongst them was Josiah Bell. Few persons had ever seen Bell absolutely intoxicated; but he occasionally took enough to render him more sullen than usual; and at such times he was sure to be quarrelsome.

Turning out of the Golden Shaft on this second day between twelve and one o'clock, Bell went along the street towards his home, together with some more men who lived in that direction. Dr. Raynor chanced to be standing on the pavement outside his house, and accosted Bell. The other men walked on.

"Not at work yet, Bell!"

"Not at work yet," responded Bell, echoing the words as doggedly as he dared, and standing still to face the Doctor while he said it.

"How long do you mean to let this fancy about the Seven Whistlers hinder you? When is it to end?"

Bell's eyes went out straight before him with a speculative look, as if trying to foresee what and where the end would be, and his tone and manner lost their fierceness. This fancy in regard to the Seven Whistlers —as the Doctor styled it—had evidently taken a serious, nay, a solemn hold upon him. Whether the other men anticipated ill-fortune from it, or no, it was most indisputable that Bell did.

"I don't know, sir," he said, quite humbly. "I should like to see the end."

"Are you feeling well, Bell?" continued Dr. Raynor, in a tone of sympathy—for the strange, grey pallor was on the man's face still.

"I'm well enough, Doctor. Why shouldn't I be?"

"You don't look well."

Bell shifted his stout stick from one hand to the other. "The Whistlers gave me a turn, I suppose," he said.

"Nonsense, man! You should not be so superstitious."

"Look here, Dr. Raynor," was the reply—and the tone was lowered to something that sounded very like fear. "You know of that bad hurt I got in the pit in Staffordshire—which lamed me for good? Well, the night previous to it I heard the Seven Whistlers. They warned me of ill-luck then; and now they've warned me again, and I know it will come. I'll not go down the mine till three days have passed. The other men may do as they like."

He walked on with the last words. Mr. Blase Pellet, who had been looking on at the passing interview from over the way, gazed idly after Bell until he had turned the corner and was out of sight. All in a moment, as though some recollection came suddenly to him, Blase tore off his white apron, darted in for his hat, and ran after Bell; coming up with him just beyond the parsonage.

What Mr. Blase Pellet communicated to him, to put Bell's temper up as it did, was best known to himself. If the young man had any conscience, one would think that a weight of remorse, for what that communication led to, must lie on it to his dying day. He was telling tales of Rosaline and Frank Raynor, representing the latter gentleman and matters in general in a very unfavourable light indeed.

"If he dares to molest her again, I'll knock his head off," threatened Bell to himself and the Bare Plain, as he parted with Pellet, and made his way across it, muttering and brandishing his stick. The other men had disappeared, each within his home. Bell was about to enter his, when Mrs. Molly Janes came out of her one room, her hair hanging, her gown in tatters, her voice shrill. She placed herself before Bell.

"I've been asking about my man. They tells me he is in a-drinking at the Golden Shaft. I'll twist his ears for him when he comes out on't! And now I'm a-going to have it out with you about they Whistlers! What the ——"

Mrs. Janes's eloquence was summarily cut short. With a sharpish push of the hand, Josiah Bell thrust her out of his way, strode on to his own door, and shut it against her.

Rosaline was alone, laying the cloth for dinner. Bell, excited by drink, abused his daughter roundly, accusing her of "lightness" and all kinds of unorthodox things. Rosaline stared at him in simple astonishment.

"Why, father, what can you be thinking of?" she exclaimed. "Who has been putting this into your head?"

"Blase Pellet," said he. "And I'd a mind to knock him down for his pains—whether it's true, or whether it's not."

"True!—that I could be guilty of light conduct!" returned Rosaline. "Father, I thought you knew me better. As to Mr. Raynor, I don't believe he is capable of an unworthy thought. He would rather do good in the world than evil."

And her tone was so truthful, her demeanour so consciously dignified, that Bell felt his ill thoughts melt away as if by magic; and he wished he *had* knocked Mr. Pellet down.

The day went on to evening, and tea was being partaken of at Dr. Raynor's. Five o'clock was the usual hour for the meal, and it was now nearly seven: but the Doctor had been some miles into the country to see a wealthy patient, and Edina waited for him. They sat round the table in the best parlour: the one whose bow-window looked on to the street. Its warm curtains were drawn before the window now, behind the small table that held the beautiful stand of white coral, brought home years ago by Major Raynor; the fire burned brightly; two candles stood near the tea-tray. Behind the Doctor, who sat facing the window, was a handsome cabinet, a few choice books on its shelves. Frank, reading a newspaper and sipping his tea, sat between his uncle and Edina.

This was the night of the ball at the Mount. Edina was going to it. A most unusual dissipation for her; one she was entirely unaccustomed to. Trennach afforded no opportunity for this kind of visiting, and it would have been all the same to Miss Raynor though it had. As she truly said, she had not been at a dance for years and years. Frank was making merry over it, asking her whether she could remember her "dancing steps."

"I am so sorry you promised for me, papa," she suddenly said. "I have been regretting it ever since."

"Why, Edina?"

"It is not in my way, you know, papa. And I have had the trouble of altering a dress."

"Mrs. St. Clare was good enough to press for your company, Edina—she candidly told me she had not enough ladies—and I did not like to refuse. She wanted *me* to go," added Dr. Raynor, with a broad smile.

"I'm sure, papa, you would be as much of an ornament as I shall be—and would be far more welcome," said Edina.

"Ornament? Oh, I leave that to Frank."

"I daresay you could dance, even now, as well as I can, papa."

Something like a spasm crossed his face. *He* dance now! Edina little thought how near—if matters in regard to himself were as he suspected—how very near he was to the end of all things.

"You look tired, papa," she said.

"I am tired, child. That horse of mine does not seem to carry me as easily as he did. Or perhaps it is I who feel his action more."

Dr. Raynor suppressed a sigh, and quitted the room. Frank rose, put his elbow on the mantlepiece, and glanced at his good-looking face in the glass.

"What time do you mean to start, Edina?"

"At half-past eight. *I* don't mean to go in later than nine. It is a shame to invite people at so late an hour!"

"It is late for Trennach," acknowledged Frank. "Mrs. St. Clare has brought her fashionable hours with her."

At that moment, the entrance-door was pushed violently open, and an applicant clattered in, in a desperate hurry. Frank went out to see.

Mrs. Molly Janes was lying at her home, half killed, in immediate need of the services of either Dr. or Mr. Raynor. Mr. Janes had just staggered home from his day's enjoyment at the Golden Shaft: his wife was unwise enough to attack him in that state; he had retaliated and nearly "done" for her. Such was the substance of the report brought by the messenger—a panting lad with wild eyes.

"You will have to go, Frank," said the Doctor. "I am sorry for it, but I am really not able to walk there to-night."

"Of course I will go, sir," replied Frank, in his cheery and ready way. "I shall be back long before Edina wants me. What are Molly Janes' chief injuries?" he asked, turning to the boy.

"He've stamped on her like a fiend, master," answered the alarmed lad. "He've broke all her bones, he have."

A bad account. Frank prepared to start without delay. He had left his hat in the parlour; and while getting it he said a hasty word to Edina—he had to go off to the cottages on the Bare Plain. Edina caught up the idea that it was Mrs. Bell who needed him: she knew of no other patient in that quarter.

"Come back as quickly as you can, Frank," she said. "You have to dress, you know. Don't stay chattering with Rosaline."

"With Rosaline!" he exclaimed, in surprise. "Oh, I see. It is not Mrs. Bell who wants me, Edina; it is Molly Janes. She and her husband have been at issue again."

With a gay laugh at Edina's advice touching Rosaline, and at the rather serious and certainly meaning tone she gave it in, Frank hastened away. The fact was, some odds and ends of joking had been heard in the village lately, coupling Frank's name with the girl's, and they had reached the ears of Edina. She intended to talk to Frank warningly about it on the first opportunity.

When about half-way across the Bare Plain, Frank saw some man before him, in the bright moonlight, who was not over steady on his

legs. The lad had gone rushing forward, thinking to come in for the tail of the fight; should it, haply, be still going on.

"What, is it you, Bell!" exclaimed Frank, recognizing the man as he overtook and passed him. "You've had nearly as much as you can carry, have you not?" he added, in light good-nature.

Bell, it was. Staggering home from the Golden Shaft. A very early hour indeed, considering the state he was in, for him to quit the seductions of that hostelrie. He had been unwise enough to go back to it after his dinner, and there he had sat till now. Had he kept sober, the matter whispered to him by Blase Pellet would not have returned to rankle in his mind: as it was, it began to do so ominously. With every cup he took, the matter grew in his imagination, until it assumed an ugly black picture. And he had now come blundering forth with the intention of "looking out for himself," as ingeniously suggested to him by Blase Pellet. In short, to track the steps and movements of the two implicated people: to watch whether they met and all about it.

"Perhaps other folks will have as much as they can carry soon," was his insolent retort to Frank, lifting the heavy stick in his hand menacingly. At which Frank only laughed, and sped onwards.

A terribly savage mood came over Josiah Bell. Seeing Frank strike off to the right, towards the row of miners' dwellings, he concluded that it was to his house he was bent—to see Rosaline. And he gnashed his teeth in fury, and gave vent to a fierce oath because he could not overtake the fleet steps of the younger man.

Bursting in at his own door when he at length reached it, he sent his eyes round the room in search of the offenders. But all the living inmates that met his view consisted of his wife in her mob cap and white apron, knitting, as usual, in her own chair, and the cat sleeping upon the hearth.

"Where's Rosaline?"

Mrs. Bell put down her knitting—a grey worsted stocking for himself—and sighed deeply as she gazed at him. He had not been very sober at dinner-time: he was worse now. Nevertheless she felt thankful that he had come home so soon.

"She's gone out!" he continued, before Mrs. Bell had spoken: and it was evident to her that the fact of Rosaline's being out was putting him into a furious passion. "Who is she along with?"

"Rose went over after tea to sit a bit with Granny Sandon. Granny's worse to-day, poor thing! I'm expecting her back every minute."

Bell staggered to the fire-place and stood there lifting his stick. His wife went on with her knitting in silence. To reproach him now would do harm instead of good. It must be owned that his exceeding to this extent was quite an exceptional case: not many times had his wife known him do it.

"Where's Raynor?" he broke out.

"Raynor!" she echoed, in surprise. "Do you mean Mr. Frank Raynor? I don't know where he is."

"He came in here a few minutes ago."

"Bless you, no, not he," returned the wife, in an easy tone, thinking it the best tone just then.

"Tell ye, I saw him come here."

"The moonlight must have misled you, Josiah. Mr. Raynor has not been here to-day. Put down your stick and take off your hat, man: and sit down and be comfortable."

To this persuasive invitation, Bell made no reply. Yet a minute or two he stood in silence, gazing at the fire; then, grasping his stick more firmly in his hand, and ramming his hat upon his head, he staggered out again, shutting the door with a bang. Mrs. Bell sighed audibly: she supposed he was returning to the Golden Shaft.

Meanwhile Frank Raynor was with Mrs. Molly Janes. Her damages were not so bad as had been represented. Leaving her a model of artistically-applied sticking-plaster, Frank started for home again. The night was most beautiful; the sky clear, save for a few fleecy clouds that now and then passed across it, the silvery moon riding grandly amidst them. Just as Frank came opposite the Bottomless Shaft he met Rosaline, on her way home from Granny Sandon's.

They stayed to speak—as a matter of course. Frank told her of the affray that had taken place, and the punishment of Molly Janes. While Rosaline listened, she kept her face turned in the direction she had come, as though she were watching for some one: and her quick eyes discerned a figure approaching in the bright moonlight.

"Good-night—you pass on, Mr. Frank," she suddenly and hurriedly exclaimed. "I am going to hide myself here for a minute."

Darting towards the Bottomless Shaft, she took refuge amongst the mounds by which it was surrounded: mounds which looked just like great earth batteries, thrown up in time of war. Instead of passing on his way, Frank followed her, in sheer astonishment: and found her behind the furthermost mound at the back of the Shaft.

"Are you hiding from *me?*" he demanded. "What is it, Rosaline? I don't understand."

"Not from you," she whispered. "But why didn't you go on? Hush! There's some one going to pass that I don't want to see."

"Who is it? Your father? I think he is gone home."

"It is Blase Pellet," she answered. I saw him at the shopdoor as I came by, and I thought he followed me. He talks nonsense, and I would rather walk home alone. "Listen! Can we hear his footsteps, do you think, sir? He must be just going by now."

Frank humoured her: he did not particularly like Blase Pellet himself, but he had no motive in being still, save that it was her wish. On

the contrary, he would have preferred to be travelling homewards, for he had not much time to lose. Whistling very softly, scarcely above his breath, his back against the nearest mound, he watched the white clouds coursing in the sky.

"He must have passed now, Rosaline."

She stole cautiously away, to reconnoitre; and came back with a beaming face.

"Yes," she said, "and he has made good speed, for he is out of sight. He must have set off with a run, thinking to catch me up."

"I wonder you were not afraid to go through the mounds by yourself and pass close to the Bottomless Shaft!" cried Frank, in a tone of raillery, and no longer deeming it necessary to lower his voice. "Old Sandon's ghost might have come out, you know, and eaten you up."

"I am not afraid of old Sandon's ghost," said Rosaline.

"I daresay not!" laughed Frank.

In a spirit of bravado, or perhaps in very lightness of heart, Rosaline ran suddenly through the zigzag turnings and windings, until she stood close to the mouth of the Shaft. Frank followed her, quickly too, for in truth he was impatient to be gone.

"I am listening for the ghost's groans," said she, her head bent forward over the yawning pit, her ear turned in the attitude of listening. It was a dangerous position: the least slip, one incautious step nearer, might have been irredeemable: and Frank put his arm round her waist to protect her.

Another half moment passed, when they hardly knew what occurred. A bellow of rage, a heavy stick brandished over them in the air by some intruder, and Rosaline started back, to see her father. Old Bell must have been hiding amongst the mounds on his own score, looking out for what there might be to see.

Down came the stick heavily on Frank's shoulder. An instant's scuffle and a push ensued: a yell from a despairing, falling man; a momentary glimpse of an upturned face, a shrill cry of horror in a woman's voice; an agonised word from her companion; a heavy thud, as of some dull weight dropping into the earth at what sounded like a frightful distance, and all was over. And Francis Raynor and the unhappy Rosaline were alone; standing together under the pitiless moonlight.

(*To be continued.*)

ROSE LODGE.

IT looked the prettiest place imaginable, lying under the sunlight, as we stood that first morning in front of the bay. The water was smooth and displayed lovely colours: now green, now blue, as the clouds passed over the face of the sky, now taking tinges of brown and amber; and towards evening it would be pink and purple. Further on, the waters were rippling and shining in the sun. Fishing vessels stood out at sea, plying their craft; little cockle-shells, their white sails set, disported on it; rowing boats glided hither and thither. In the distance the grand waves of the sea were ebbing and flowing; a noble merchantman, all her canvas filled, was passing proudly on her outward-bound course.

"I should like to live here," cried Tod, turning away at last.

And I'm sure I felt that I should. For I could watch the ever-changing sea from morning to night, and not tire of it.

"Suppose we remain here, Johnny?"

"To live?"

"Nonsense, lad! For a month. I am going for a sail. Will you come?"

After the terrible break-up of our boating tour, we came to this little place, Cray Bay, which was on the sea coast, a few miles beyond Templemore. Our pleasure cut short at the beginning of the holiday, we hardly knew what to do with the rest of it, and felt like two fish suddenly thrown out of water. At Cray Bay we found one small inn, which bore the odd sign of the Whistling Wind, and was kept by Mrs. Jones, a stout Welshwoman. The bed-room enjoyed a look-out at some stables, and would not hold much more than the two small beds in it; and she said she could not give us a better.

The discomforts of the lodging were forgotten when we strolled out to look about us, and saw the beauties of the sea and bay. Cray Bay was a very primitive spot: little else but a bettermost fishing place. It had not then been found out by the tour-taking world. Its houses were built anyhow and anywhere; its shops could be counted on your fingers: a butcher's, a baker's, a grocer's, and so on. Fishermen called at the doors with fish, and countrywomen with butter and fowls. There was no gas, and the place at night was lighted with oil-lamps. A trout-stream lay at the back of the village, half a mile away.

Stepping into a boat, on this first morning, for the sail proposed by Tod, we found its owner a talkative old fellow. His name was Druff, he said; he had lived at Cray Bay most of his life, and knew every nch of its land and every wave of its sea. There couldn't be a nicer

spot to stop in for the summer, as he took it; no, not if you searched the island through: and he supposed it was first called Cray Bay after the cray-fish, they being caught in plenty there.

"More things than one are called oddly in this place," remarked Tod. "Look at that inn: the Whistling Wind; what's that after?"

"And so the wind do hoostle on this here coast; 'deed an' it do," returned Druff. "You'd not forget it if you heered it in winter."

The more we saw of Cray Bay that day, the more we liked it. And Tod made up his mind to stay for a time if lodgings could be found.

"But, what would they say at home to our staying here?" I asked, the next morning at breakfast.

"What they chose," said Tod, cracking his fourth egg.

"I am afraid the Pater ——"

"Now, Johnny, you need not put in your word," he interrupted, in the off-hand tone that always silenced me. "It's not your affair. We came out for a month, and I am not going back home, like a bad sixpence returned, before the month has expired. Perhaps I shall tack a few weeks on to it. I am not dependent on the Pater's purse."

No; for he had his five hundred pounds lying untouched at the Worcester Old Bank, and his cheque-book in his pocket.

Breakfast over, we went out to look for lodgings; but soon feared it might be a hopeless search. Two little cottages had a handboard stuck on a stick in the garden with "Lodgings" on it. But the rooms in each proved to be a tiny sitting-room and a more tiny bed-room, smaller than the garret at the Whistling Wind.

"I never saw such a world as this," cried Tod. "If you want a thing you can't get it. Oh, by George! Look there, Johnny!"

We had come to the last house in the place—a fresh-looking, charming cottage, with a low roof and a green verandah, that we had stopped to admire yesterday. It faced the bay, and stood by itself in a garden that was a perfect bower of roses. The green gate bore the name "Rose Lodge"; and in the parlour window appeared a notice "To Let," which had not been there the previous day.

"Fancy their having rooms to let here!" cried Tod. "How lucky!"

In he went impulsively, striding up the short gravel path, and knocked at the door. It was opened by a tall grenadier of a female, rising six feet, with a spare figure and sour face. She had a large cooking apron on, dusted with flour.

"You have lodgings to let," said Tod. "Can I see them?"

"Lodgings to let?" she repeated, scanning us up and down attentively; and her voice sounded harsh and rasping. "I don't know that we have. You had better see Captain Copperas."

She threw open the door of the parlour; a small square bright looking room; with a gay carpet, a cottage piano, and green chairs.

Captain Copperas came forward: a retired seaman, as we heard

later ; tall as the grenadier, and with a brown weather-beaten face. But in voice and manners he, at any rate, did not resemble her, for they were just as pleasant as they could be.

"I have no lodgings," said he. "My house is to let ; and the furniture to be taken to."

Which announcement was of course a vast check upon Tod. He sat, looking very blank, and then explained that we only required lodgings for a month or so.

"It's a pity but you wanted a little house," said Captain Copperas. "This is the most compact, desirable, perfect little dwelling mortal man ever was in. Rent twenty-six pounds a year only, furniture to be bought out-and-out for a hundred and twenty-five. It would be a little Eden—a Paradise—to those who had the means to take it."

As he spoke, he regarded us individually and rather pointedly. It looked as much as to doubt whether we had the means. Tod (conscious of his five hundred pounds in the bank) threw his head up.

"Oh, I have the means," said he, as haughtily as you please. "Johnny, did you put any cards in your pocket? Give Captain Copperas one."

I laid one of Tod's cards on the table. The captain took it up.

"It is a great grief to me to leave the house," he remarked. "Especially after having just settled in it, and laying in a stock of the best furniture in a plain way, purchased in the best market! Downright grief."

"Then why do you leave it?" naturally asked Tod.

"Because I have to go afloat again," said the sailor, his face taking a rueful expression. "I thought I had given up the sea for good ; but my old employers won't let me give it up. They know my value as a master, and have offered me large terms for another year or two of service. A splendid new East Indiaman, two thousand tons register, and—and, in short, I don't like to be ungrateful, so I have said I'll go."

"Could you not keep on the house until you come back?"

"My sister won't let me keep it on. Truth to say, she never cared for the sea and wants to get away from it. That exquisite scene"—extending his hand towards the bay, and to a steamer working her way onwards near the horizon—"has no charms for Miss Copperas. No : I can only give the place up, and dispose of the furniture. It will be a fine sacrifice. I shall not get the one half of the money I gave for it ; don't look to."

I could read Tod's face as a book, and the eager look in his eyes. He was thinking how much he should like to seize upon the tempting bargain ; to make the pretty room we sat in, and the prettier prospect yonder, his own. Captain Copperas appeared to read him also.

"You are doubting whether to close with the offer, or not," he said, with a frank smile. "You might make it yours for a hundred and twenty-five pounds. Perhaps—pardon me ; you are both but young—you may not have the sum readily at command?"

"Oh yes, I have," said Tod candidly. "I have it lying at my banker's, in Worcester. No, it's not for that reason I hesitate. It is—it is—fancy me with a house on my hands!" he broke off, turning to me with a laugh.

"It is an offer that you will never be likely to meet with again, sir."

"But what on earth could I do with the house and the things, after we had stayed here for a month or two?" urged Tod.

"Why, dispose of them again of course," was the ready answer of Captain Copperas. "You'd find plenty of people willing to purchase, and to take the house off your hands. Such an opportunity as this need not go begging. I only wish I had not to be off in a hurry; I should make a very different bargain."

"I'll think of it," said Tod, as we got up to leave. "I must say it is a nice little nest."

In the doorway we encountered a tall lady, with a brown face and a scarlet top-knot. She wore a thick gold chain, and bracelets to match.

"My sister, Miss Copperas," said the captain. And he explained to her in a few words our business, and the purport of what had passed.

"For goodness sake, don't lose the opportunity!" cried she, impressively affectionate, as though she had known us all our lives. "So advantageous an offer was never made before; and but for my brother's obstinately and wickedly deciding to go off to that wretched sea again, it would not be made now. Yes, Alexander"—turning to him—"I do call it quite wicked. Only think, sir,"—to Tod: "a houseful of beautiful furniture, every individual thing that a family can want; a piano here, a table-cloth press in the kitchen; plate, linen, knives, forks; a garden full of roses and a roller for the paths: and all to go for the miserable sum of a hundred and twenty-five pounds! But that's my brother all over. He's a true sailor. Setting himself up in a home to-day, and selling it off for an old song to-morrow!"

"Well, well, Fanny," he said, when he could get a word in edgeways to stem the torrent of eloquence, "I have agreed to go, and I must go."

"Have you not been over the house?" she resumed. "Then do pray come. This is the dining-room," throwing open a door behind her.

It was a little side-room, looking up the coast and over the fields, with a few chairs and tables in it. Upstairs we found three chambers, with their beds and other things. It all looked very comfortable.

"This is the linen closet," said Miss Copperas, opening a narrow door at the top of the stairs, and displaying some shelves that seemed to be well filled. "Sheets, table-cloths, dinner-napkins, towels, pillow-cases; everything for use. Anybody taking the house, has only to step in, hang up his hat, and find himself at home. Look at those plates and dishes!" she ran on, as we got down again and entered the kitchen. "They are very nice—and enough to dine ten people."

They were of light blue ware, and looked nice enough on the dresser shelves. The grenadier stood at the table, chopping parsley on a trencher, and did not condescend to take any notice of us.

Out in the garden next, amidst the roses—which grew all round the house, clustering everywhere. They were of that species called the cabbage rose; large, and fragrant, and most beautiful. It made me think of the Roses by Bendemeer's stream.

"I should like the place of all things!" cried Tod, as we went down to get a sail; and found Druff seated in his boat, smoking. "I say, Druff, do you know Captain Copperas?—Get in, Johnny."

"Lives next door to me at Rose Lodge," answered Druff.

"Next door! What, is that low whitewashed shanty your abode! How long has Copperas lived here?"

"A matter of some months," said Druff. He came in the spring."

"Are they nice kind of people?"

"They be civil to me," answered Druff. "Sent my missis a bottle o' wine and some hot broth t'other day when she was ill——"

A sudden lurch put a stop to the discourse, and in a few minutes we glided out of the bay, Tod's gaze fixed on Rose Lodge.

"My mind's made up, Johnny. I shall take the place."

I dropped my knife and fork in very astonishment. Our sail over, we were at dinner in the bar-parlour of the Whistling Wind.

"Surely you won't do it, Tod!"

"Surely I shall, lad. I never saw such a nice little nest in all my life. And there's no risk: you heard what Copperas said. I shall get my money back again when we want to leave it."

"Look here, Tod: I was thinking a bit while we sat in the boat. Does it not seem to you to be too good to be genuine?"

It was Tod's turn now to drop his knife and fork; and he did it angrily. "Just tell me what you mean, Johnny Ludlow."

"All that furniture, and the piano, and the carpets: it looks such a heap to be going for a hundred and twenty-five pounds."

"Well?"

"I can't think that Copperas means it."

"*Not mean it!* Why, you young muff! *There are the things*, and he offers them. If Copperas chooses to part with them for half their value, am I to tell him he's a fool? The man is driven into a corner through lack of time. Sailors are uncommonly improvident."

"It is such an undertaking, Tod."

"It is not your undertaking."

"Of course it is a tremendous bargain; and it is a beautiful little place to have. But the Pater will never forgive you, Tod; or me either. He will say the world's coming to an end."

"If you are afraid of him, young Johnny, you can betake yourself

Hand up your plate for some more lamb, and hold your tongue.'

Away went Tod to Captain Copperas, and told him he would take the house, and drew out his cheque-book, to give a cheque for the money there and then. But the Captain, like an honest man, refused to receive it until an agreement was signed; and, if all the same, he said, he would prefer money down, to a cheque. Cheques were all very good, no doubt, but sailors did not much understand them. Oh, of course, Tod answered, shaking him by the hand; he would get the money.

Inquiring of our landlady for the nearest bank, Tod was directed to St. Ann's, a town three miles off; and we started for it, pelting along the hot and dusty road. The bank found—a small one with a glazed bow-window—Tod presented a cheque for a hundred and fifty pounds, twenty-five of it being for himself, and asked the clerk to cash it.

The clerk looked at the cheque and at us. "This is not one of our cheques," he said. "We have no account in this name."

"Can't you read?" asked Tod. "The cheque is upon the Worcester Old Bank. You know it well by reputation, I presume?"

The clerk whisked into a small kind of box, divided from the office by glass, where sat a bald-headed gentleman writing at a desk full of pigeon holes. A short conference, and then the latter came to us, holding the cheque in his hand.

"We will send and present this at Worcester," he said; "and shall get an answer the day after to-morrow. No doubt we shall then be able to give you the money."

"Why can't you give it me now?" asked Tod, rather fiery.

"Well, sir, we should be happy to do it; but it is not our custom to cash cheques for strangers."

"The cheque will be honoured," flashed Tod. "I have five hundred pounds lying there! Do you suppose I want to cheat you?"

"Oh, certainly not," said the banker with suavity. "Only, you see, we cannot break through our standing rules. Call upon us the day after to-morrow, and doubtless the money will be ready."

Tod came away swearing. "The infamous upstarts! To refuse to cash my cheque! Johnny, it's my belief they take us for a couple of adventurers."

The money came. Getting it from the cautious banker, we rushed straight to Rose Lodge from St.Ann's. Tod signed the agreement, and paid the cash in Bank of England notes. Captain Copperas brought out a bottle of champagne, which tasted uncommonly good to our thirsty throats. He was to leave Cray Bay that night on his way to Liverpool, and Miss Copperas would give up possession on the morrow. Elizabeth, the grenadier, was to remain with us as servant. Miss Copperas recommended her, hearing Tod say he did not know where

to look for one. We bargained with her to keep up a good supply of pies, and to pay her twenty shillings a month.

"Will you allow me to leave one or two of my boxes for a few days?" asked Miss Copperas of Tod, when we went down on the following morning, and found her equipped for departure. "This has been so hurried a removal that I have not had time to pack all my things, and must leave it for Elizabeth to do."

"Leave anything you like, Miss Copperas," replied Tod, as he shook hands. "Do what you please. I'm sure the house seems more like yours than mine."

She thanked him, wished us both good-bye, and set off to walk to the coach office, attended by the grenadier, and a boy wheeling her luggage. And we were in possession of our new home.

It was just delightful. The weather was charming, though precious hot, and the new feeling of being in a house of our own, with not as much as a mouse to control us and our movements, was satisfactory in the highest degree. We passed our days sailing about with old Druff, and came home to the feasts prepared by the grenadier, and to sit among the roses. Altogether we had never had a time like it. Tod took the best chamber, facing the sea; I had the smaller one over the dining-room, looking up coastwards.

"I shall go fishing to-morrow, Johnny," Tod said to me one evening. "We'll bring home some trout for supper."

He was stretched on three chairs before the open window; coat off, pipe in mouth. I turned round from the piano. It was not much of an instrument. Miss Copperas had said, when I hinted so to her on first trying it, that it wanted "age."

"Shall you? All right," I answered, sitting down by him. The stars were shining on the calm blue water; lights, looking like stars also, twinkled from some vessels at anchor.

"If I thought they'd not quite die of the shock, Johnny, I'd send the pater and madam an invitation to come off here and pay us a visit. They would fall in love with the place at once."

"Oh, Tod, I wish you would!" I cried, eagerly seizing on the words. "They could have your room, and you mine, and I would go into the little one at the back."

"I daresay! I was only joking, lad."

"I wish you'd let me write and tell them what we've done."

"No," said he. "I don't want the pater to whirl himself off here and spoil our peace—for that's what would come of it."

"But I ought to write to the mother, Tod. She must be wondering why I don't."

"Wondering won't give her the fever. Understand me, Mr. Johnny, you are not to write."

Breakfast over in the morning, we crossed the meadows to the trout

stream, with the fishing-tackle and a basket of prog. Tod complained of the intense heat. The dark blue sky was cloudless; the sun beat down upon our heads.

"I'll tell you what, Johnny," he said, when we had borne the blaze for an hour on the banks, the fish refusing to bite; "we should be all the cooler for our umbrellas. You be off and get them."

The low front window stood open when I reached home. It was the readiest way of entering; and I passed on to the passage. The grenadier came dashing out of her kitchen.

"Oh!" said she, looking scared. "It's you!"

"I have come back for the umbrellas, Elizabeth; the sun's like a furnace. Why! what have you got there?"

The kitchen was strewed with clothes from one end of it to the other. On the floor stood the two boxes left by Miss Copperas.

"I am only putting up Miss Copperas's things," returned Elizabeth, in her surly way. "It's time they were sent off."

"What a heap she must have!" I remarked: and left the grenadier to her work.

We got home in the evening, tired out. The grenadier had a choice supper ready; and, in answer to me, said the trunks of Miss Copperas were packed and gone. When bed-time came, Tod was asleep, at the window, and wouldn't awake. The grenadier had gone to her room ages ago; I wanted to go to mine.

"Tod, then! Do please wake up. It is past ten."

A low growl answered me. And in that same moment I became aware of some mysterious stir outside the front gate. People seemed to be trying it. The grenadier always locked it at night.

"Tod! Tod! There are people at the gate—trying to get in."

The tone and the words aroused him. "Eh? What do you say, Johnny? People at the gate?"

"Listen! They are whispering. They are trying the fastenings."

"What on earth do they want at this time of night?" growled Tod. "And why can't they ring, like decent people? What's your business!" he roared out from the window. "Who the dickens are you?"

"Hush, Tod! It—it can't be the squire, can it? Come down to look after us."

The suggestion silenced him for a moment. "I—I don't think so, Johnny," he slowly said. "No, it's not the squire: he would be letting off at us already from the top of his voice; he'd not wait to come in to do it. Let's go and see. Come along."

Two young men stood at the gate. One of them turned the handle impatiently as we went down the path.

"I wish to see Captain Copperas."

"Then you can't see him," answered Tod, woefully cross after being startled out of his sleep. "Captain Copperas does not live here."

"Not live here!" repeated the man. "That's gammon. I know he does live here."

"I tell you he does not," haughtily repeated Tod. "Do you doubt my word?"

"Who does live here, then?" asked the man in a different tone; evidently impressed.

"Mr. Todhetley."

"I can take my oath that Captain Copperas lived here ten days ago."

"What of that? He is gone, and Mr. Todhetley's come."

"Can I see Mr. Todhetley?"

"You see him now. I am he. Will you tell me your business?"

"Captain Copperas owes me a small account, and I want it settled."

The avowal put Tod in a rage; and he showed it. "A small account! Is this a proper time to come bothering gentlemen for your small accounts—when folks are gone to bed, or going?"

"Last time I came in the afternoon. Perhaps that was the wrong time? Any way, Captain Copperas put me off, saying I was to call some evening, and he'd pay it."

"And I'll thank you to betake yourself off again now. How dare you disturb people at this unearthly hour? As to Captain Copperas, I tell you that he is no longer here."

"Then I should say that Captain Copperas was a swindler."

Tod turned on his heel at the last words, and the men went away, their retreating footsteps echoing on the road. I thought I heard the grenadier's window being shut, so the noise must have disturbed her.

"Swindlers themselves!" cried Tod, as he fastened the house-door. "I'll lay you a guinea, Johnny, they were two loose fellows trying to sneak inside and see what they could pick up."

Nevertheless, in the morning he asked the grenadier whether it was true that such men had come there after any small account. And the grenadier resented the supposition indignantly. Captain Copperas owed no "small accounts" that she knew of, she said; and she had lived with him and Miss C. ever since they came to Cray Bay. She only wished she had heard the men herself last night; she would have answered them. And when, upon this, I said I thought I had heard her shut her window down, and supposed she had been listening, she denied it, and accused me of being fanciful.

"Impudent wretches!" ejaculated Tod. "To come here and asperse a man of honour like Copperas!"

That day passed off quietly, and to our thorough enjoyment; but the next one was fated to bring events. Some words of Tod's, as I was pouring out the breakfast coffee, startled me.

"Oh, by Jupiter! How have they found us out here?"

Looking up, I saw the postman entering the gate with a letter. The

same thought struck us both—that it was some imperative mandate from the squire. Tod went to the window and held out his hand.

"For Elizabeth, at Captain Copperas's," read out the man as he handed it to Tod. It was like a relief; and Tod sent me with it to the grenadier.

But in less than one minute afterwards she came into the room, bathed in tears. The letter said that her mother was lying ill at their home, some unpronounceable place in Wales, and begging to see her.

"I'm sorry to leave you at a pinch; but I must go by the afternoon coach," sobbed the grenadier. "I can't help myself."

Well, of course, there was nothing to be said against it. A mother was a mother. But it was awkward. The grenadier graciously offered to cook our luncheon before starting.

We went off for a sail. Upon getting back at one o'clock, we found a huge meat pie upon the luncheon table, and the grenadier with her bonnet on. Tod paid her what was due.

Presently was heard the bumping of boxes on the stairs. At the gate stood the boy with the truck, ready to wheel them to the coach office, as he had wheeled those of Miss Copperas. Tod was helping himself to some more pie, when the grenadier threw open the door.

"My boxes are here, gentlemen. Will you like to look at them?"

"Look at them for what?" asked Tod, after staring a minute.

"To see that I'm taking none of your property away inside them."

At last Tod understood what she meant, and felt inclined to throw the dish at her head. "Shut the door, and don't be a fool," said he.

"And I hope you'll find your mother better," I called out after her.

"And now, Johnny, what are we to do?" he cried, when the lunch was over and there was nobody to take it away. "This is like a second experience of Robinson Crusoe."

We left it where it was, and went to the shops and the Whistling Wind, asking if they knew of a servant. But servants seemed not to be forthcoming at a pinch; and we told our troubles to old Druff.

"My missis shall come in and see a bit to things for ye," said he. "She can light the fire in the morning anyway, and boil the kettle."

And with the help of Mother Druff—an ancient dame who went about in clogs—we got on till after breakfast in the morning, when a young girl came after the place. She wore a pink gauze bonnet, smart and tawdry, and had a pert manner.

"Can you cook?" asked Tod.

The substance of her answer was, that she could do everything under the sun, provided she were not "tanked" after. Her late missis was for ever a tanking. Would there be any washing to do?—because washing didn't agree with her. And how often could she go out, and what was the wages?

Tod looked at me in doubt, and I slightly shook my head. It struck me that she would not do at any price. "I think you won't suit," said he to her.

"Oh," returned she, all impertinence. "I can go, then, where I shall suit: and so, good morning, gentlemen. There's no call for you to be so uppish. I didn't come after your forks and spoons."

"The impudent young hussie!" cried Tod, as she slammed the gate. "But she might do better than nobody, Johnny."

"I don't like her, Tod. If it rested with me, I'd rather live upon bread and cheese than take her."

"Bread and cheese!" he echoed. "It is not a question of only bread and cheese. We must get our beds made and the knives cleaned."

It seemed rather a blue look out. Tod said he would go up again to the Whistling Wind, and tell Mother Jones she must find us some one. Picking a rose as he went down the path, he met a cleanly-looking elderly woman, who was entering. She wore a dark apron, and old-fashioned white cap, and said she had come after the place.

"What can you do?" began Tod. "Cook?"

"Cook and clean too, sir," she answered. And I liked the woman the moment I saw her.

"Oh, I don't know that there's much cleaning to do, beyond the knives," remarked Tod. "We want our dinners cooked, you know, and the beds made. That's about all."

The woman smiled at that, as if she thought he knew little about it. "I've been living at the grocer's, up yonder, sir, and they can give me a good character, though I say it. I'm not afraid of doing all you want, and of giving satisfaction, if you'd please to try me."

"You'll do," said Tod. "Can you come in at once?"

"When you like, sir. Would you please go for my character?"

"Oh, bother that," said he. "I've no doubt you are all right. Can you make pigeon pies?"

"That I can, sir."

"You'll do, then. What is your name?"

"Elizabeth Ho——"

"Elizabeth!" he interrupted, not giving her time to finish. "Why the one just gone was Elizabeth. A grenadier, six feet high."

"I've been mostly called Betty, sir," she remarked, saying that she'd go and come back with her aprons. Tod looked after her.

"You like her, don't you, Johnny?"

"That I do. She's a good sort; honest as honest can be. You did not ask her about wages."

"Oh, time enough for that," said he.

And Betty turned out to be as good as gold. Her history was a curious one; she told it to me one evening in the kitchen; in her

small way she had been somewhat of a martyr. But God had been with her always, she said, through trouble and trial.

We got a letter from Mrs. Todhetley, redirected on from Sunbury. The chief piece of news it contained was, that the squire and old Jacobson had gone off to Great Yarmouth for a fortnight.

"That's good," said Tod. "Johnny, lad, you may write home now."

"And tell about Rose Lodge?"

"Tell all you like. I don't mind madam. She'll have leisure to digest it against the pater returns."

I wrote a long letter, and told everything, going into the minute details that she liked to hear, about the servants, and all else. Rose Lodge was the most wonderful bargain, I said, and we were both as happy as the days were long.

The church was a little primitive edifice near the sands. Upon getting home from service on Sunday morning, we found the cloth not laid. As Tod had ordered dinner to be on the table, he sent me to the kitchen to blow up Betty.

"It is quite ready and waiting to be served; but I can't find a clean table cloth," said Betty.

"Why, I told you where the table cloths were," shouted out Tod, who heard the answer. "In that cupboard at the top of the stairs."

"But there are no table cloths there, sir," cried she. "Nor anything else either, except a towel or two."

Tod went up in a passion, bidding her follow him, and flung the door open. He thought she had looked in the wrong place.

But Betty was right. With the exception of two or three old towels and some stacks of newspapers, the cupboard was empty.

"By Jove!" cried Tod. "Johnny, that grenadier must have walked off with all the linen!"

Whether she had, or not, none, to speak of, could be found now. Tod talked of sending the police after her, and wrote an account of her delinquencies to Captain Copperas, addressing the letter to the captain's brokers in Liverpool.

"But," I debated, not quite making matters out to my own satisfaction, "the grenadier wanted us to examine her boxes, you know."

"All for a blind, Johnny."

The next morning, Monday, upon looking from my window, something struck me as being the matter with the garden. What was it? Why, all the roses were gone! Down I rushed, half dressed, burst out at the back door, and gazed about me.

It was a scene of desolation. The rose trees had been stripped; every individual rose was clipped neatly off from every tree. Two or

three trees were left untouched before the front window; all the rest were rifled.

"What the mischief is the matter, Johnny?" called out Tod, as I was hastily questioning Betty. "You are making enough noise."

"We have had robbers here, Tod. Thieves. All the roses are stolen."

Down he came, full rush, and stamped about the garden like anybody wild. Old Druff and his wife saw him, and came up to the palings. Betty, busy in her kitchen, had not noticed the disaster.

"I see Tasker's people here betimes this morning," observed Druff. "A lot of 'em came. 'Twas a pity, I thought, to slice off all them nice big blows."

"Saw who?—saw what?" roared Tod, turning his anger upon Druff. "You mean to confess to me that you saw these rose-trees rifled, and did not stop it?"

"Nay, master, how could I interfere with Tasker's people?"

"Who are Tasker's people?" foamed Tod. "Who is Tasker?"

"Tasker? Oh, Tasker's that there man at the white cottage on t'other side the village. Got a big garden round it."

"Is he a poacher? Is he a robber?"

"Bless ye, master; Tasker's no robber."

"And yet you saw him take my roses?"

"I see him for certain. I see him busy with the baskets as the men filled 'em."

Dragging me after him, Tod went striding off to Tasker's. We knew the man by sight; he was a kind of nuseryman. Tasker was standing near his greenhouse.

"Why did I come and steal your roses?" he quietly repeated, when he could understand Tod's fierce demands. "I didn't *steal* 'em, sir; I picked 'em."

"And how dared you do it?—who gave you leave to do it?" foamed Tod, turning purple with rage.

"I did it because they were mine."

"Yours! Are you mad?"

"Yes, sir, mine. I bought 'em and paid for 'em. I bought 'em of Captain Copperas. I had 'em from the garden last year and the year afore. Three pounds I gave for 'em this time. The Captain sold 'em to me a month ago, and I was to take my own time for gathering them."

"I don't think Tod had ever felt so *floored* in all his life. He stood back against the pales and stared. A month ago we had not known Captain Copperas.

"I might have took all the lot: 'twas in the agreement; but I left ye a few afore the front winder," said Tasker in an injured tone. "And you come and attack me like this!"

"But what do you want with them? What are they taken for?"

"To make attar of roses. I've sold 'em to the distillers."

"At any rate, I would have taken them openly," snapped Tod. "Not come like a thief in the night."

"But then I had to get 'em afore the sun was powerful," reasoned Tasker.

Tod was silent all the way home. Betty brought in the coffee.

"Pour it out," said he to me. "But, Johnny," he presently added, as he stirred his cup slowly round, "I *can't* think how it was that Copperas forgot to tell me he had sold the roses."

I must say we were rather in the dumps that day, and went off fishing. I did wish I had not said so much about the roses to Mrs. Todhetly. What I wrote was, that they were brighter and sweeter and better than those other roses by Bendemeer's Stream.

I thought of the affair all day long. I thought of it when I was going to bed at night. Putting out the candle, I leaned from my window and looked down on the desolate garden. The roses had made its beauty.

"Johnny! Johnny, lad! Are you in bed?"

The cautious whisper came from Tod. Bringing my head inside the room, I saw him at the door in his slippers and braces.

"Come into my room," he whispered. "Those fellows who disturbed us the other night are at the gate again."

Tod's light was out and his window open. We could see a man bending down outside the gate, fumbling with its lock. Presently the bell was pulled very gently, as if the ringer thought the house might be asleep and he did not want to awaken it. There was something quite ghostly to the imagination in being disturbed at night like this.

"Who's there?" shouted Tod.

"I am," answered a cautious voice. "I want to see Captain Copperas."

"Come along, Johnny. This is getting complicated."

We went out. The man was not either of the two who had come before. Tod spoke to him, but did not open the gate.

"Are you a friend of the Captain's?" whispered the man.

"Yes, I am," said Tod. "What then?"

"Well, see here," resumed he in a confidential tone. "If I don't get to see him, it will be the worse for him. I come as a friend; come to warn him."

"But I tell you he is not in the house," argued Tod. "He has let it to me and left Cray Bay. His address? No, I cannot give it."

"Very well," said the man, "I came out of friendliness. If you know where he is, you just tell him that Jobson has been here, and warns him to look out for squalls. That's all."

"I shall begin to believe we are living in some mysterious castle, if

this kind of thing is to go on," remarked Tod, when the man had gone. "It seems deuced queer, altogether."

It seemed queerer the next morning. For a gentleman walked in, and demanded payment for the furniture. Captain Copperas had forgotten to settle for it, he said—if he *had* gone away. Failing payment, he should be obliged to take away the chairs and tables. Tod flew into a rage, and ordered him out of the place. Upon which their tongues went in for a pitched battle, and gave out some unorthodox words. Cooling down by-and-by, an explanation was come to.

He was a member of some general furnishing firm, ten miles off. Captain Copperas had done them the honour to furnish his house from their stores, including the piano, paying a small portion on account. Naturally they wanted the rest. In spite of certain strange doubts that were arising touching Captain Copperas, Tod resolutely refused to give any clue to his address. Finally the applicant agreed to leave matters as they were for three or four days, and wrote a letter to be forwarded to Copperas.

But the news that arrived from Liverpool staggered us more than all. The brokers sent back Tod's first letter to Copperas (telling of the grenadier's having marched off with the linen), and wrote to say that they did not know any Captain Copperas; that no gentleman of that name was in their employ, or in command of any one of their ships. People began to apply, too, for petty accounts that seemed to be owing—a tailor, a bootmaker, and others. Betty shed tears.

One evening, when we had come in from a long day's fishing, and were sitting at dinner in the front room in rather a gloomy mood, wondering what was to be the end of it, we caught sight of a man's coat whisking its skirts up to the front door.

"Sit still," cried Tod to me, as the bell rang. "It's another of those precious creditors. Betty, don't you open the door. Let the fellow cool his heels a bit."

But, instead of cooling his heels, the fellow stepped aside to our open window, and stood looking in at us. I leaped out of my chair, and nearly out of my skin. It was Mr. Brandon.

"And what do you two fine gentlemen think of yourselves?" began he, when we had let him in. "You don't starve, at any rate, it seems."

"You'll take some, won't you, Mr. Brandon," said Tod politely putting the breast of a duck upon a plate, while I drew a chair for him to the table.

Ignoring the offer, he sat down by the window, threw his yellow silk handkerchief across his head, and opened upon our delinquencies in his thinnest tones. In the squire's absence, Mrs. Todhetley had given him my letter to read, and begged him to come and see after us,

for she feared Tod might be getting himself into some inextricable mess. Old Brandon's sarcasms were keen. To make it worse, he had heard of the new complications, touching Copperas and the furniture, at the Whistling Wind.

"So!" said he, "you must take a house and its responsibilities upon your shoulders, and pay the money down and make no inquiries!"

"We made lots of inquiries," struck in Tod, wincing.

"Oh, did you! Then I was misinformed. You took care to ascertain whether the landlord of the house would accept you as tenant; whether the furniture was the man's own to sell, and had no liabilities upon it; whether the rent and taxes had been paid up to that date?"

As Tod had done nothing of the kind, he could only slash away at the other duck and bite his lips.

"You took to a closet of linen, and did not think it necessary to examine whether linen was there, or whether it was all dumb show——"

"I'm sure the linen was there when we saw it," interrupted Tod.

"You can't be sure; you did not handle it, or count it. The squire told you you would hasten to make ducks and drakes of your five hundred pounds. It must have been burning a hole in your pocket. As to you, Johnny Ludlow, I gave you credit for some sense."

"I could not help it, sir. I'm sure I should never have mistrusted Captain Copperas——" But doubts had floated in my mind whether the linen had not gone away in those boxes of Miss Copperas, that I saw the grenadier packing.

Tod selected a paper from the letter-case in his breast-pocket, and handed it to Mr. Brandon. It was a cheque for one hundred pounds.

"I thought of you, sir, before I began upon the ducks and drakes. But you were not at home, and I could not give it you then. And I thank you very much indeed for what you did for me."

Mr. Brandon read the cheque and nodded his head sagaciously.

"I'll take it, Joseph Todhetley. If I don't, the money will only go in folly." By which, I fancied he had not meant to have the debt repaid to him.

"I think you are judging me hardly," said Tod. "How was I to imagine that the man was not on the square? When the roses were here, the place was the prettiest I ever saw. And it was dirt cheap."

"So was the furniture, to Copperas," observed Mr. Brandon.

"What is done is done," growled Tod. "May I give you some raspberry pudding?"

"Some what? Raspberry pudding! Why, I should not digest it for a week. What are you going to do?"

"*I* don't know, sir. Do you?"

"Yes. Get out of the place to-morrow. It's going to be stripped, I hear. Green simpletons, you must be! I daresay the landlord will

let you off by paying him three months' rent. I'll see him myself. And you will both come home with me, like two young dogs with their tails burnt."

"And lose all my money?" cried Tod.

"Ay; and think yourself well off that it is not more. You have no redress; as to finding Copperas, you may as well set out to search for the philosopher's stone. It is nobody's fault but your own; and if it shall bring you caution, it may be an experience cheaply bought."

"I could never have believed it of a sailor," Tod remarked ruefully to old Druff.

"Ugh! fine sailor he was!" grunted Druff. "*He* warn't a sailor. Not a reg'lar one. Might ha' been about the coast a bit in a home vessel, perhaps—naught more. As to that grenadier, I believe she was just another of 'em—a sister."

But we heard a whiff of news later that told us Captain Copperas was not quite so bad as he seemed. After he had taken Rose Lodge and furnished it, some friend, for whom in his good nature he had stood surety to a large amount, let him in for the whole, and ruined him.

And so that was the inglorious finale to our charming retreat by Bendemeer's Stream.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

OUTWARD-BOUND.

In the calm harbour where the vessels ride,
Safe-moored, our ship awaits the rising tide,
  And first red glimmer of the dawning day,
  The tide has risen, and the morning's ray
Shows anchor lifted, sails in swelling pride
Unfurling to the breeze; then, fair and wide—
  While the bold prow casts up the glitt'ring spray—
  Daring the deepest waters of the bay.
Where is our good ship bound for? Will she gain
  The port for which she steers? Will no rude blast,
  No flash of lightning, shiver boom and mast,
And leave her wrecked upon the seething main?
  Our hopes are ventured in the brave "*New Year*,"
  God speed her on her way with freight so dear!

EMMA RHODES.

AT GRENOBLE.

By the Author of "A Night in a Monastery."

WE steamed away from Dover about four hours before Captain Boyton was to plunge himself into the waters, and commence crossing on his own account. It was a splendid night, but dark: the sea perfectly calm. The cabins were crammed; and sundry Frenchmen, spite of the smooth water, had evidently resigned themselves to a mauvais quart d'heure in their lives. The stars had never been more bright, and were reflected in myriads of dancing lights upon the ripples of the dark water. The night breeze swept over us laden with the freshness of sea and sky, bracing up body and spirit after the confinement of town life.

Some hours later, as we were rushing towards Paris, dawn broke over the sky and exhibited my fellow travellers in what, under other circumstances, would have been thought the various attitudes of inebriation. Those first moments of daybreak are not pleasant to a sleepless wanderer. The light, as it quietly creeps over the face of nature, seems to be stealing a certain amount of life from you; until by and by the sun shoots above the horizon with healing in his wings.

Paris at last. And one poor drowsy traveller, having lost his ticket from Calais (he had probably torn out two coupons instead of one on leaving the boat), had the consolation of paying over again the sum of thirty-eight francs for his carelessness. This completely aroused him.

I found that the train southward would not start before 7 P.M. Therefore I passed the time in looking up old friends, and in revisiting the lions of the capital: lions I had seen hundreds of times before. Gazing in awe and sadness at the tombs of Rousseau and Voltaire in the Panthéon: in admiration and wonder at the Sainte Chapelle, of which the beauty and architecture, and richly stained windows seemed more than ever to harmonize; again in awe and wonder at the matchless beauty of Notre Dame, and its almost unrivalled Gothic grandeur: living over again in imagination the many and strange scenes its lifetime has witnessed. Where in 1431 Henry VI. of England was crowned King of France; and where, in 1793, the insane and bloodthirsty revolutionists, disowning all religion, celebrated a feast to the Goddess of Reason; whilst a woman, stuck upon the high altar, impersonated the goddess herself and threw kisses to her worshippers. To-day service was going forward, and I listened spellbound as the tones of the organ and the voices of the chanters went rolling through the "long drawn aisles and

fretted vaults" of the cathedral. Finishing up in the afternoon with a drive to the Bois de Boulogne, where I was greeted with a sight of at least thirty fair brides in flowing white, and their bridal parties, who were hastening thither "pour faire la noce." It was Saturday, and Saturday in Paris is the great day for weddings amongst a certain class.

I had been travelling tantamount to four days and nights, and when I reached Lyons at 5 A.M. and entered the buffet for some refreshment, I found I had lost my voice. This was perplexing and a new experience. So upon entering the buffet a series of pantomimic gestures went forward with the waiters, to the amusement of such sleepy travellers as were sufficiently awake to take notice, and who had tumbled out of the train at Lyons, pêle mêle, for breakfast on their road to Marseilles.

And what guys they looked, both men and women! A large proportion of them were English, of course: and if there be one time above another when we cannot feel proud of our fair compatriots, it is when we meet them abroad on their travels. Their object sight-seeing, they are themselves the greatest sight to be seen. On this particular morning, yet cool and grey, the buffet might have been mistaken for a managerie of harmless lunatics. The men looked black and dust-stained, unshaven and cross. The ladies were becoming objects for a fifth of November. Eyes blinking, hair dishevelled, skirts draggle-tailed, shawls dragging, and bonnets hanging or flattened into every conceivable shape. The mysteries of chignons were revealed, and the latter seemed in jeopardy of parting with their owners. Ten minutes given to a very moderate supply of comestibles for which an extortionate price was demanded, and the whole troupe at the given signal (that abominable "En voiture, messieurs et dames, en voiture," just as you are in the middle of a scalding cup of coffee) shuffled across the rails, to their various compartments. A few moments more, doors banged, and away steamed the express towards Marseilles.

I was left alone in the buffet; the Grenoble train did not start for another ten minutes. Yet no; not alone: one other traveller had been left behind—a repulsive-looking little Frenchman, with a distressing cold in his head, and his body wrapped in a huge fur cloak. This gentleman was patrolling up and down the room like a bear in a cage, and, to my natural chagrin, when we started off again it was in the same compartment. It may fairly be doubted whether he had ever enjoyed the luxury of a warm bath. We both alighted at Grenoble, and some days after, happening to enter the principal hotel in the town at breakfast-time (half-past eleven), he was discovered devouring his fish with his fingers.

Grenoble, as most readers will know, is the chief town of the Isère; and the Isère is one of the most favoured departments of France.

Under the Ancien Régime, Grenoble was the Capital of the Dauphiné. The department of the Isère lies to the south-east of France, and takes its name from the important river which flows through its territories in a direction N.E. to S.W. The Isère is less remarkable for its length

SASSENAGE.

than its immense mass of water. It rises amongst the glaciers of the massive Iseran, a group of mountains in Savoy, between France and Italy, and finally empties itself into the Rhone. In its course near Grenoble, the river flows through the Graisivaudan, a valley by many considered to be the most beautiful in France, as it is undoubtedly one of the richest and most fertile.

The Rhone, says the proverb, runs upon golden sands. And verily, when we gaze upon its surface we can believe anything of its wondrously lovely and liquid green and azure waters. The Dauphiné is the richest province in France in botanical productions. Every plant pertaining to the extreme south is said to be indigenous to its soil; and this owing to the variations of its climate, which are as numerous as the many heights and depths of this district. Wild animals abound in its woods and forests. The bear is found in the more deserted parts. The wild boar, once prevalent, has now become scarce; the chamois inhabits heights inaccessible to man; the stag is now almost extinct, but the fox is found extensively.

The Dauphiné, in the old days, was said to possess seven wonders, four of which are to be found in the department of the Isère. Of these four wonders the chief is the *Caves of Sassenage*, situated at a short distance from Grenoble, and reached by a delightful drive. These caves are at the foot of a rocky mountain, and, amidst black darkness, penetrate some way into the interior. A torrent of water rushes out from this subterranean passage, and empties itself at last into the Isère. Nothing can be more beautiful and romantic than this spot, with its mysterious caverns, its immense mountains, its rushing water, and its banks covered with wild flowers.

With regard to the history of its people, a few rare monuments are all that remain to testify to the existence of an unknown race that in the primitive ages occupied the department of the Isère. In those days Grenoble was nothing more than a small village on the right bank of the river. It possessed no importance whatever until the time of Diocletian and Maximilian, who surrounded it with fortifications to protect it against the inroads of the barbarians. It is said that St. Paul, on his road to Spain, stayed awhile at Vienne, then the capital of the Dauphiné, and left them his disciple Crescens, as their minister. Whether or not this be true, it is certain that this town possessed a Christian bishop in the first century.

The reign of the Dauphins, both of the first and second dynasty, was destitute of any very important events, occupied, as its leaders were, for the most part, with internal wars and strifes with the neighbouring petty lords or princes, and more especially directed against the counts of Savoie. The end of the 14th century was marked by persecutions organised against the Vaudois, a sect so called from their leader Peter de Vaud, or Valdo, who from the 12th century had preached first in Lyons, then in the mountains of the Dauphiné and Savoie, the doctrine that all things should be held in common by Christians. 230 unhappy martyrs perished at the stake from 1380 to 1394; and the persecution was only finally arrested by Louis XII. in 1501.

In 1572, the massacre of St. Bartholomew spared its victims in Grenoble, thanks to the noble courage and energy of the governor of

the province, who disobeyed the orders of the court. The protestants of the Dauphiné then took up arms, again headed by the brave leaders Montbrun and Lesdiguières, and met with alternate victories and reverses. On the 25th of November, 1590, Lesdiguières laid siege to Grenoble, which surrendered after 25 days of blockade. Henry IV., in gratitude, then conferred upon the Duke of Lesdiguières the governorship of Grenoble and the whole province, which became happy and prosperous under his wise rule.

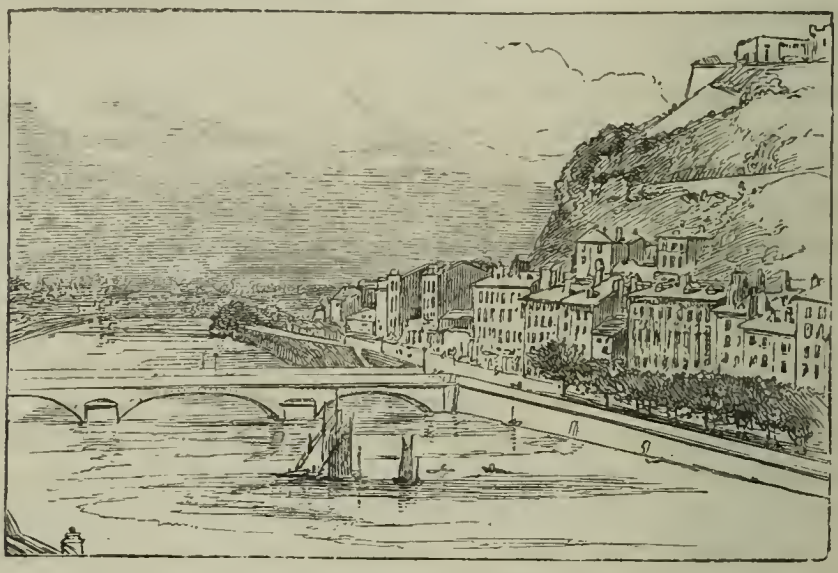
Lesdiguières now became little less than king of the Dauphiné, and amongst his people was designated *king of the mountains*. To him Grenoble owed many of its fortifications, its quays, and the present ancient stone bridge, and the province was indebted to him for many useful works and improvements. The château de Vizille, one of the most ancient and most interesting buildings in the neighbourhood of Grenoble, was also constructed by him for his own residence, and here he was visited by Louis XIII.

Amidst other vicissitudes and disasters, the Dauphiné has suffered greatly from floods. The last one was perhaps the most terrible of all. On the 2nd of November 1859, the Isère suddenly rose and overflowed its banks, and in a few hours the town of Grenoble was under water to the depth of about five feet. In some portions of the town it even reached to the first floor windows. The town itself is well built, and possesses a few handsome buildings. Its position is perhaps superior in beauty of site to all others in the empire. Its chief branch of industry is the making of gloves. There are considerably over a hundred manufactories, which send forth annually above a million dozen pairs of gloves, valued at more than thirty millions of francs. This gives employment to nearly 25,000 hands, male and female. Such were the statistics when the census was last taken; but as all things, population and industry, the law of demand and supply, go on increasing year by year, the probability is that the above statement is now much below the mark.

In this charming and favoured spot it was now my fate to sojourn for some little time. It was a glorious morning, hot and sunny, as I gladly left the train and entered the town. But the heat had only very lately set in, and the surrounding mountains lay thick and white in their deep coverings of snow. The croix of the "Champ Roux," a cross twelve feet high, on the summit of one of the loftiest peaks, lay embedded in its pure but icy sepulchre. Nothing marked its position but a small, almost imperceptible thin tip of iron, which the hot sun had brought into view within the last day or two. More snow than usual had fallen this year, and by and by avalanches and floods might be looked for.

Grand, indeed, the mountains looked; powerful and wonderful. An inestimable privilege to be able to pass one's life, and have one's home

amongst them; to keep them constantly before the sight, for ever influencing the mind and the spirit. Is it possible for mankind to attain the same degree of holiness and perfection in the midst of the fretting, the fashion and frivolity of a metropolis, that it does or can attain when surrounded by these everlasting hills? hills which, like the boundless ocean, suggest reflections and breathe influences more of heaven and immortality, the wisdom and power of their Creator, than thoughts merely of earth and earthly aspirations? One thing at least is certain: the struggle after perfection in the gay world and fashionable throng must be a far harder fight and battle, though a more triumphant and meritorious victory, than it is for those who erroneously bury themselves in cloistered cells, or for those who can go to the mountains and sea for silent communion.



QUAI DE FRANCE, GRENOBLE.

Here then I dwelt amidst such influences. At a few miles' distance from Grenoble, overlooking the beautiful valley of the Graisivaudan, and perched on the Alpine side, stands an old château, which became my head-quarters during my sojourn in this most favoured part of the world. Let me attempt to describe it.

Following a long, white, straight road for a considerable distance, you at length turn to the right, and a short, steep ascent lands you at the château. It is an old building. Large rambling rooms, some of them panelled in the quaint old mode so gratifying to the eye and taste; others fitted up in a more modern and graceful style. Old-fashioned fire places, with huge logs of wood burning upon the dogs; wood that throws up a crackling blaze and perfumes the room, and casts a rich quaint homely smell through corridors suggesting thoughts of a baker's oven, and delicious, new, hot, French bread and galettes. Each to his own customs: every country to its usages; but if wood

fires are not a success in England, they are at any rate very much appreciated and very much in place in these Alpine districts.

All the reception-rooms are on the ground floor: the ground floor of *this* part of the house; but the château being built on a slope, the back part of the house (or, as some people might call it, the front) possesses a floor yet lower, appropriated to the kitchen offices. The floor above is devoted to the bedrooms, and there is a small oratory for the use of the Roman Catholic members of the château's household. Let us take a glance at this oratory, of which the door is half open.

On a small shelf is the lamp usually kept burning before the altar, evidently having hastily been left by some one in the act of preparing it for use. A couple of chairs are at the foot of the two steps by

CHATEAU DE VIZILLE.

which the altar is approached. On the altar itself are candlesticks, an image, and some gaudy, tinselly flowers, with a small reading-desk, holding a copy of a book—probably a missal. On the right wall is an ill-painted picture of a saint or monk, with an expression that all the colouring and imagination of a dévote could not interpret into the beauty of holiness. In the left wall, opposite this nightmare of a picture, is the only small window which gives light to the oratory. It is difficult to quit the place and shut it in with its silence and superstition, without a feeling of regret; for whatever may be the errors and ignorance of these devotees, how much is there about them that is laudable and worthy of honour.

But leaving the oratory to itself, with all that may be right or wrong about it, let us enter some of the rooms. Swing back one of those large French windows, and gaze out upon the scene before you. Hold your breath as you gaze: for, as in the oratory you have just quitted, the worshippers would stimulate their imaginations an religious

fervour by the help of golden images and painted flowers and saintly portraits, and soothe their senses by sweet smelling incense whose subtle properties throw a glow upon the fancy: so here you feel that you have thrown behind you all unhealthy and artificial influences, and stand before Nature herself in her most splendid aspect. The atmosphere you have just left is obliterated; you are awestricken at the presence of the work of the Creator (with all reverence be it spoken) fresh as when on the world's early morning were brought forth the mountains and the hills.

Before and around us are the snow mountains, white wavy undulations clearly mapping their outlines against the bright blue sky. At a certain distance from the summit the snow ceases, and the mountains show themselves as they are. Some barren and rugged, and uncultivated; others thick and dark with pine forests, in which you may lose yourself at pleasure if you are an Alpine climber: nothing but a compass will enable you to steer your course. Others again, far up the height, are a succession of gardens and vineyards, and pasture for the use of cattle. Winding paths, so steep as to be impracticable to the foot of one not accustomed to climbing, hide themselves on the mountain side, though easily found and boldly scaled by the sure footed Alpine peasants, and their herds of cows, goats, and painfully thin sheep—cattle certainly after Pharaoh's lean kind.

Below us, from the window whence we are gazing, stretches the vast plain and valley of the Graisivaudan, through which the Isère threads its silvery course. What landscape is perfect without water? and this river goes winding about for miles amidst this wild and splendid scenery, unconscious of the beauty around it, and of its own charms. Past many a village where daily the small and simple tragedies of human village life are enacted: the loves of Corydon and Phillis; the sorrows of an Atala; the intrigues of a Romeo and Juliet; the tomb of a Paul and Virginia, an Abelard and Héloise. Past many an acre, and many a mile of dreary pasture land, with here and there a spot redeemed from bog and morass by some enterprising husbandman. Many a secret has floated down upon its bosom, to be revealed only on that great day when the secrets of all hearts shall be known. Down in that nook yonder we lose sight of its course. The mountains intervene, and it is now flowing past Grenoble; its gurgling waters keeping time to the throbs and beats of weal and woe of the great town.

Across there, somewhat to the left, in the natural outline of that mountain's slope, we see distinctly traced the head and face of the first Napoleon, apparently lying in the calm sleep of death, looking for all the world as the third Emperor of that name looked when lying in state on that last memorable day at Camden House. The image of the one conjures up the recollection of the other, and if inclined to

meditate—like Harvey amidst the tombs—a thought will flash over us of our own mutability, and that of our interests and all belonging to us—in comparison with these eternal hills, which have stood the test of ages unchanged and unchanging, and with which from this very fact this poor mortal body seems to have nothing in common. Alas! our life is but as the vapour which clings around these hills, so soon passeth it away, and our place is no more remembered. Well might the bird sing in the Garden of Armida :—

"So passes as a passing day
The flowering youth of man;
Nor April's mild returning ray
May bid him bloom again.
Then pluck, while yet the morn is bright,
The rose, ere day's serene soft light
Hath passed and faithless proved.
Oh, pluck the rose of love the while
Life, joy, and beauty on ye smile,
While loving ye are loved!" *

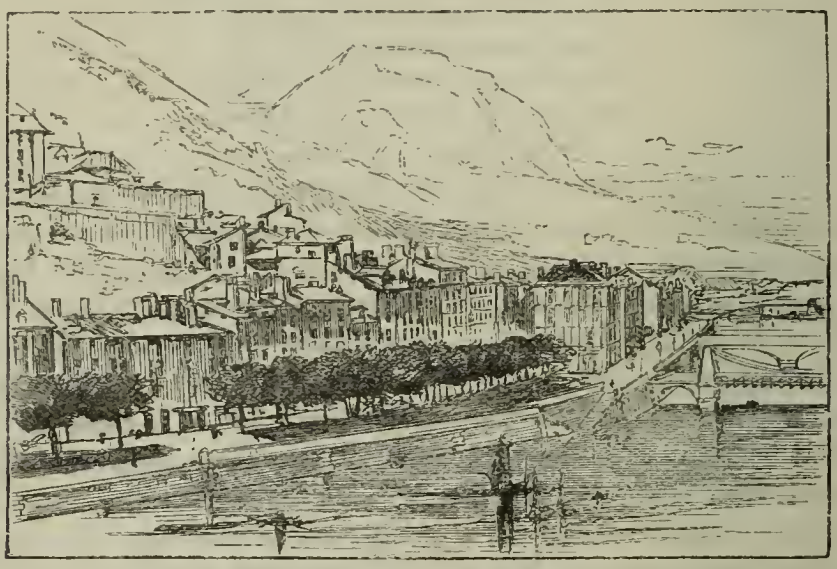
The plain at our feet is dissected into green fields of various tints; yet are they destitute of hedges, a feature which adds so inestimably to the picturesqueness of our English landscapes. Immediately beneath us sleeps the small village: a few thatched cottages inhabited by the simple peasantry. A flying leap would almost land us far down upon one of their straw-built roofs. From one or other of them the blue smoke of the wood or peat fire is ascending; and in a scene so primitive and beautiful it is almost possible to fancy ourselves back in the primeval days when the incense of the evening sacrifice went up to Heaven. As night draws on, a white mist hovers over the river, by which its course may be traced long after light has faded. But the daylight is still broad and dazzling as we gaze. And hark! a strain of celestial music fills the air; a flood of melody; wave upon wave, now here, now yonder, now ascending, now softly lulling. It is the nightingale: the mingled harmony of hundreds of these feathered songsters, who here keep up an incessant chorus by day and night. We have nothing like this in all England. I doubt even if we have skies as pure and blue as those above us.

Now turn to the other side of the house. Passing through the front door into the grounds, we find ourselves upon a terrace in the mountain slope. Before us are orange-trees in large wooden boxes. Up to a certain height the slope is cultivated: here vegetable beds, there vine trellises. Still higher, a mountain path, and beyond that, woods and plantations. To our left is a long fine avenue of splendid trees, almost meeting overhead, the indispensable delight of the château; trees which shade you completely from the mid-day sun.

It was a luxurious pleasure when at home, to sit in this avenue in a

* Translated from Tasso by Alice King.

comfortable lounge, with a book or writing-desk, cool, shady, and quiet as it was, whilst the sun ran his hot course through the glaring sky. White fleecy clouds would chase each other above, and throw light and shadow and tone upon the landscape. Behind the avenue, the fruit trees, laden with blossom, pink and white, showered down their wealth upon the cool green grass, an ideal picture of snow in harvest. Occasionally the fancy would seize some of us to migrate from the shady avenue to the narrower but pleasant shelter of one of these trees, and there enjoy the showers of blossom that every slight breeze scattered around. In all the air the nightingales kept up a ceaseless strain of enraptured music; whilst at intervals the blackcap joined in with his strangely beautiful note, in charm second only to that of the



QUAI PERRIERE, GRENOBLE.

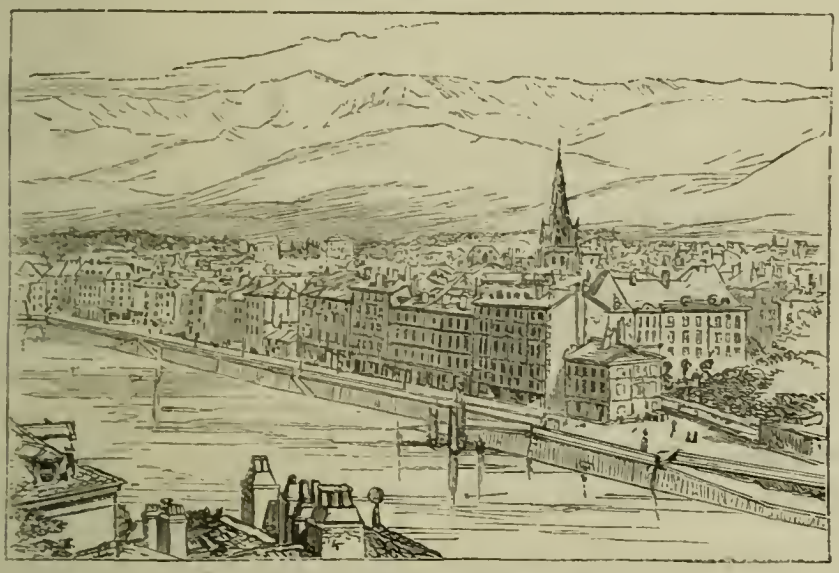
nightingale itself. Instinctively White's faithful description rises up to memory.*

It was nothing less than fairyland. The long avenue of trees in their early spring freshness; the valley at our feet, through which the silvery river ran its course; the mountains on every side covered with snow, their summits turned to a glorious pink and rose glow at sunset, as if they had blushed at the touch of an angel's wings; near at hand the vineyards and the flowers, and the fruit trees rivalling the whiteness of the mountain tops, with their superabundance of blossom; the quiet stillness of the whole scene, save for the flood of the nightingale's song, or the far-off jödel of some distant Alpine peasant, reclaiming his

* "The blackcap has in common a full, sweet, deep, low, and wild pipe; yet that strain is of short continuance, and his motions are desultory. But when that bird sits calmly and engages in song in earnest, he pours forth very sweet but inward melody, and expresses great variety of soft and gentle modulations, superior to those of our warblers, the nightingale excepted."—WHITE'S "Selborne."

scattered flocks. In the garden amidst this beauty, a spring of water gushed out into a fountain from the hidden recesses of the earth, whilst a young child, graceful and lovely, who might have been the fairy of this enchanted land, flitted hither and thither, with a step as light and noiseless as a midsummer night's elf. But if the comparison is to hold good, then must fairies sometimes be naughty; for some such simple drama as the following would occasionally break in upon our quiet life :—

Approaching the avenue, this little fairy, "sunning over with curls," and beauty and laughter, but with a conscious look in her eyes, looks askance at mamma seated opposite. Her pinafore and frock are wet; shoes and socks likewise. Mamma looks up. Katie suddenly stands



QUAI NAPOLEON, GRENOBLE.

still, half defiant, half imploring. "Oh, Katie, disobedient again! You have been playing with the fountain." "I only wanted to wash my doll's face," say Katie, with a strong French accent, looking towards some one else for refuge. "But I have told you day after day you are *not* to play with the water," continues mamma. "But—I—wanted—to—wash—my—doll's—face," persists four-year-old Katie, with a wave of her hands and a shrug of her shoulders that would have done honour to a coquette of old French Cour life. The words are spoken with a deliberate emphasis, and the stress upon the first personal pronoun is marked. "Very well," replies mamma, rising quietly, and with a dignified emphasis equally marked; "but as Katie is disobedient she must be put to bed." Then suddenly there is a vision of graceful little legs and arms flying, and before it is possible to say Jack Robinson, somebody is in danger of strangling. A tiny pair of hands clasp themselves round the neck, and Katie clings, sobbing, as if for dear life. "Oh, Uncle Tarles! Uncle Tarles! *don't* let me be put to bed! *don't* let me

be put to bed!" But a relentless mamma with some difficulty unclasps the little hands (for every day Katie is warned, and every day transgresses), and a little sobbing figure is marched into the château. Mamma comes out again alone, and by-and-by I steal in on tiptoe. There, on a snowy couch, with lips parted and cheeks flushed, and hair splendidly rumpled, reposes the small vision of beauty, sleeping the sleep of the innocent and the blessed.

CHARLES W. WOOD.

VOICES IN THE NIGHT.

A voice went wailing through the night:
"Weep, for the year is dying, weep for the moments flying;
With all thy force and might thou canst not stay their flight.
Weep, for the year is dying."

The voice went moaning as in pain:
"Weep for the misspent year, sing requiems o'er its bier;
Thou canst not find again the scattered golden grain.
Weep—for the passing year."

The voice sank sobbing in despair:
"Weep for the tears you've shed, weep for the joys now fled;
The hopes that promised fair, all melted into air.
Weep, for the year is *dead*."

A voice went ringing through the night:
"Rejoice, a year is born! no longer weep and mourn;
With glorious light and promise bright,
Shall burst the New Year's dawn."

On through the silent frosty night
Shrill rang the voice and clear: "Fresh hopes, fresh joys are here;
A tablet white on which to write.
Greet then the New-born Year!"—E. L.

BARBARA EARLE.

Chapter I.

I WAS crossing the bridge that sweet summer morning to visit little Elsie, the miller's ailing daughter, when I heard a voice below me on the river bank singing an old Yorkshire ditty. The clear tenor was very familiar to me; and, leaning over the side of the bridge, I saw the singer, George Renwick. By his side stood Barbara Earle, listening to the words of the sweet song yet trembling upon his lips. Her modest eyes were cast down, a tear hung glistening upon the silken lashes. Tears were rarer than smiles with happy Barbara, and the sight of that glittering drop gave me a sharp, uneasy sensation. What had George Renwick been teaching her during this my recent absence? Love was the burden of the young man's song; and the tableau was charming enough to tempt an artist's pencil, for it was one of the prettiest bits of landscape in all Yorkshire, the clear river winding, like a silver ribbon, between verdant banks. The water-lilies (spoiled beauties over their mirror) were nodding complacently to their reflected faces; a flock of birds came rising out of the woods beyond, soaring up with a cheerful twitter and the morning sunlight on their waving wings. But the fairest thing of all was Barbara Earle. Pretty Barbara Earle, the sweet Wild Rose of Olney!

Barbara was leaning against the rustic railing which ran down the river bank; her pretty hands filled with wild flowers, which she had plucked from the banks of the bubbling stream. Her hat hung by its strings from her unconscious arms: to judge by her face, she was not conscious of anything there, save one: that handsome cavalier who stood by her side. Barely sixteen, very slight and small, she looked even younger than her years; but in the depth of her rich brown eyes might be read feeling deep as a woman's. A smile played on her delicate mouth; thought sat on her broad, earnest brow. The wind might blow roughly upon that sweet face and the sunlight tan its delicate bloom; but neither wind nor sun could rob it of that higher loveliness which her pure life and her innocent soul had stamped there indelibly. It gave me a chill to see George Renwick with her thus. He was my cousin; but I knew that he was neither better nor worse than other idle and fashionable young men. Was he trifling with this pretty blossom? If he stooped to pluck the Wild Rose of Olney, would it be to wear it tenderly in his bosom for life? Or, alas, to cast it aside broken and faded, after it had ceased to

amuse the tedium of a passing hour? I knew him well, I say; and trembled for Barbara.

Do not misunderstand the fear. There was nothing vicious or depraved about the young man: he would not, as I believed, deliberately set himself out to injure a young girl, least of all, Barbara Earle; but he was the most incorrigible flirt that ever trifled with a lady's fan or breathed sentiment into a lady's ear. A sunny-tempered, genial fellow, with the head of Antinous, and the voice almost of an angel, who played with what hearts he chose, and—broke them. Sailing through life like a butterfly in a rose garden, sipping sweets from every fresh young blossom, and leaving naught in return—unless it was a sting. His foolish mother used to say that George was born to break hearts; and truly, if he were, he fulfilled his destiny with a grace, a polish, a perfection which were worthy a better cause. He went travelling after he quitted the University, and came back, long-haired, sentimental, bitten by Goethe; and with no end of locks of hair in his possession, mementoes of the hearts he had won. From Germany and France to Italy and Turkey went he; the Cape had seen him; Spanish America had held him: and he praised the last place most of all. Ah, what with orange-groves and guitars, dancing-girls and castanets, superb donnas with fire-flies in their dusky hair, George had reduced flirting to a science, long before pretty Barbara looked up in his face with her honest eyes, and believed him, with a blush, when he vowed he had never loved woman before. Poor, confiding child! What knew she of that dark-eyed Dolares, or that golden-haired Guadaloup, who had once enchained him? If he had reckoned his loves upon a chaplet (as the Bonzes reckon their prayers) the string of beads would have made her a substantial necklace—thrice around her pretty white neck and a few to boot. Would she believe me if I told her as much? Most probably not: and somehow I did not like to interfere. A caution I might give her when I got the opportunity, but no more.

So, after leaning over the old railing, watching the tableau below me, I turned away with a sigh and walked on. After what I had seen, the bridge was almost as hard to cross as that of the old woman in the nursery rhyme who tried to get home with her blackberries. My heart was full of pity for Barbara. So long as George Renwick played shuttle-cock and battledore with hearts of his own calibre it mattered little; *that* was a game both parties understood. But Barbara's heart was no thing of cork and feathers; and *she* was no ordinary girl, though her lot was cast, for the present, in a very ordinary sphere. Born of an educated mother, a gentle, lady-like woman and clergyman's widow, she inherited a peculiar delicacy and refinement of feeling; of a deep, reticent nature, a wound of this kind would be sharply felt and very long in healing. As to persuading myself that George was in earnest

at last, the thing was out of the question : he would never make a mésalliance. Besides, he loved his unfettered life too well, and would be the last man in the world to hang the millstone round his neck with his own hands. Poor Barbara was no match for him. Though of gentle birth and reared with as many little refinements as Mrs. Earle's slender income would allow, Mr. George would no doubt see little, if any, difference between her and the village girls. Why, Elsie, the miller's daughter, was richer than Barbara.

"Heaven help you, my poor Barbara!" I said in my heart, as I came out of the green lane to the miller's garden; and found the sick Elsie sitting in the sun, with the wind stirring the flaxen hair about her shoulders. The patient little creature had her lap full of fresh flowers, which she was twining into garlands; and the very sight of her mild face was as soothing as oil upon troubled waters.

"Oh, Miss Nora!" she cried, and would have risen; but I stopped her.

"Who taught you to make these pretty wreaths, my lass?" said I, stroking her hair, and thinking of that other Elsie whom Longfellow's golden rhyme has made immortal.

"Barbara taught me, ma'am. Barbara and Mr. Renwick.

The young Elsie spoke without the harsh Yorkshire dialect; thanks perhaps to her associating with Barbara; something in the pleasant voice reminded me of Barbara's sweet tones. As I suspected, Mr. George had been making himself perfectly at home with these simple country-folk. As a near relative of our house, he was welcome everywhere. Apart from flirting, he knew how to win hearts. He had won this little one's with toys and trinkets.

I sat down on the grass by her chair; and, fanning myself slowly with my garden-hat, somehow or other, despite my vexation, I felt the peace of the summer morning sinking into my heart. How blue the bending sky was—flecked with its tiny, floating vapours; and how sad it was that, under such a true, faithful heaven, men like George Renwick (and their name is legion) could act out their thoughtless follies, day after day, while earnest souls looked on in silence and felt themselves powerless!

The old mill was working close at hand with a merry clatter, a healthy activity in its very noise; the cheerful voices of the miller and his men came ringing into the quiet garden like the chorus of a rural opera. How peaceful it was! When I had rested and dreamed in the long grass until Elsie fell asleep among her flowers, I went into the miller's house and talked with the miller's wife about the dairy and the harvest and the prospect of rain; and, last of all, was led to look at a picture of Barbara on the whitewashed wall, which a travelling artist had done in water-colours for a night's lodging.

"But why did you not have Elsie taken instead of Barbara?"

"Elsie was too tired, ma'am. It was one of her worst evenings; and Miss Barbara chanced to be here."

It was a faithful sketch, with more merit than could be expected from an itinerant pencil and brush; and I was yet studying the graceful turn of the head, with its wavy hair, soft eyes, and tremulous mouth, when I heard George Renwick's voice in the garden. He was playing with Elsie, whom he had awakened with a shower of roses; and he came in presently, humming the "Miller's Daughter," and asked for a glass of milk. While the wife ran to get it for him, all alacrity and cheerfulness, as though he had been a prince, he talked to me in his easy way, and sat himself down in front of Barbara's picture. Something came up about the shooting season, and George remarked that he should not be here for it.

"Why not?" I asked.

"For the simple reason that I shall not be in England," he replied. "Vive l'Amerique! I cannot resist my destiny."

"Vive l'Amerique!" I repeated. "Are you going off to that Spanish America again?"

"Yes; it suits me."

"*It!* The life there, I suppose, you mean—your Donna Annas and Isabels." George laughed.

"And when do you go? In a month?"

"In a week, Nora; and less than that."

Well, it might be for the best. But—unconsciously my eyes wandered from his handsome face to the pictured one on the wall. His gaze followed mine.

"In sooth—

'She has a lovely face,
God in his mercy lend her grace,'"

he said, in a sweet, low voice.

"Lancelot broke Elaine's heart before he pitied her," added I, significantly.

"Did he?" returned he, as if thinking of something else. So cruel, so careless, when Barbara's happiness might be trembling in the balance!

"Oh, George, how unmanly you are!" The words broke from me as the miller's wife went into the garden to Elsie, leaving us alone. "What sort of a masquerade is this?"

He lifted his hat from one hand to another and smiled. He never did aught but smile, chide him as I would.

"Life is not a bal masqué," I went on vehemently, provoked at my own excitement, but unable to control it. "Nor can every peasant girl you flirt with forget—as *you* do——"

"Eloquent Nora!" he interrupted, approvingly. "You have not

only made me a Don Giovanni, but also found me my Zerlina. Where is Masetto?" And he began to whistle "La ci darem."

I was too indignant to utter another syllable. But George followed me out to the wicket, and took my hand in spite of me—took both my hands and held them with a grasp that made them ache long after.

"I know I am a sad fellow," he said, looking at me with his gay blue eyes; "but I am not as bad as you seem to think, Mrs. Monitor, with your wise twenty years. I have not done any harm."

"You have," I said, passionately. "You have gained a sweet girl's fresh young heart, and now you are going to leave her."

"Don't pout, ma belle cousine. Wish me bon voyage, and—pray for me."

He walked away with a laugh upon his lips. The next moment he was back again. His aspect changed to a tender earnestness.

"I *do* care for her," he whispered. "But, she is not of our degree, and what can come of it? My best course, the only one open to me, is to run away. In quitting you and her, I leave behind me all I hold dear."

"Don't attempt to talk sentiment to *me*, George. She is of our degree; quite sufficiently so. Her mother is a gentlewoman."

"Dear old lady! When I strolled into the cottage this morning with Barbara, she had her gown tucked up, shelling peas."

His half-mocking, half-light, and wholly pleasing manner had come back upon him. I was angry with myself for not being more angry with him. And he saw it.

"Nora, you were always given to heroics; but do just for a moment exercise your common sense. Is this little flower, half peasant, wholly rustic, fit to take her place in the world as Mrs. George Renwick? I wish she were, Heaven bless her!"

"But, George——"

"No more, Nora. My wife may not be as sweet as Barbara, but she must, at any rate, be a very different woman."

That was spoken emphatically enough, and the discussion was at an end for ever.

II.

Only a week later. Only one week. George had taken leave of all his friends, great and simple, and was gone. I had seen him leaning against the mill-door with folded arms, laughing and talking with the dusty miller; I had seen him lingering with Barbara in the glen, beside the stream. But that was yesterday, and this was to-day; and now I was pacing the green lanes and sunny fields, feeling very lonely; for George and his gay ways seemed to be strangely missed by us all.

Lured by the bright day and the pleasant mossy path, I lingered by the river, but did not cross the little bridge. The clock struck, as I

stood there, eleven ; and the sweet, silvery, far-away chime came sounding from the tower of Olney church. Turning to run down the slope to the glen, covered with buttercups and daisies, there in the midst o them sat Barbara, still as a statue ; her face, her whole attitude, full of more than dejection—of pain.

The rustle of my feet in the soft grass did not startle her ; and my hand was on her shoulder and my voice in her ear before she looked up and saw me. It frightened me then to see how very pale she was, and the anguish in her trembling lips and dark eyes. "Oh, my poor Barbara," I cried ; and the tender sympathy of my tone touched her to the quick, and she flung herself down at my feet in the purple clover, sobbing as if she would sob her life out. It passed as quickly as it had arisen—this violent gust of anguish ; and she rose up, facing me, with the great tears still upon her cheeks, but pale and quiet. A letter was in her hand ; and I began to have a glimmering of the truth. Not of the whole truth—oh, no—not of the whole cruel truth, the crushing sorrow which had come like a tornado on the blossoming of her young life.

She saw what I felt for her. In that desolate hour the poor child needed the sympathy of one older and stronger than herself.

"Will you read them, Miss Carstairs ?"

For it was two letters her shaking hands put into mine. Only one was in George's handwriting ; the other was from his great friend Burnham, and addressed to him.

"Dear Renwick,—Enclosed you will find your letter according to request. Fortunate thing I hadn't used it for a cigar-light. What the deuce did you want me to return it for ? For fear I should show it to the divine Augusta, and that the haughty beauty might take offence at your woodland nymph and discard you ? And so its name is Barbara—is it ! And it wears linsey-woolsey petticoats, and has red arms and big feet, I presume. Simplicity on a milking-stool ! Who would have thought the old bird would be caught with chaff? The châteaux en Espagne were bad enough, and the donnas and hidalgos might have taught you a lesson ; but this Yorkshire lassie beats them hollow. However, should it come to wedding-cake and cards, present my congratulations to Mrs. George. But a truce to raillery. When are you coming up ? "Yours, old fellow,

"Harry Burnham."

There was no date to this precious epistle. I remembered Burnham perfectly well. A tall outré fellow, slender and curly-headed, who had taken honours at college, and was quite a celebrity the week we went up there. I could see him yet in my mind's eye, his long arms gesticulating like the sails of a windmill, and the gown hanging from his square shoulders as gracefully as it might have hung from a hat-rack.

But digesting this letter, and thinking of Burnham, I had forgotten the other letter, which I had dropped, and Barbara had picked up.

She had not forgotten it, however. Watching me silently with her large, patient eyes, and when I had taken it from her cold fingers, she folded her arms tightly over her breast, and stood looking out at the green woods, and the lilies, and the flashing river. George Renwick wrote a peculiar hand: I recognized it at a glance. It was written to Burnham, and dated from Olney some two or three weeks back. Running hastily over some unimportant details with which it opened, I came with a quicker heart-beat to this :—

"Burnham, my boy, in this humdrum, out-of-the-way Yorkshire settlement, that you are sometimes pleased to make merry at, I have lighted on the most charming little wild flower that ever England gave birth to. They call her the 'Wild Rose of Olney,' but the anemone would be more à propos. Sensitive, delicate, and pure as an angel, I tell you, Burnham, she would repay cultivation, if a fellow had a couple of centuries to spare, like the old patriarchs. But life is too short now-a-days; perhaps too fast, perhaps too artificial. I can but sip at this fresh little flower's sweetness, like a wandering bee, and pass on again. I sing to her; I read poetry with her; the child really has refined tastes; I sit on the grass and talk with her by the hour together. Now and then a thought crosses me—but I drive it away again, for I cannot afford to train my wife. The woman I marry must be already trained; a queen of Society, like the grand Augusta. Commend me to her. As for this little Yorkshire beauty—her very name runs to poetry. Barbara Earle! Does it not rhyme to teeth of pearl? and clustering curl? and (as the yokels say here) precious gurl? Don't blow me up—and, defend me from the muses! I have not another word for you, for I am off to seek my little wild flower. I shall miss her for at least a week after I get away from Olney. Thine,

"G. R."

And *this* was the man who had held my hands in his not eight days before, and prayed "Heaven bless her!" with moist eyes. Such an earnestness in his tone, too; and such a manly tenderness in his face! Oh, Truth! Truth! lying at the bottom of the well, *you* may have looked up and seen the stars; but in this cruel darkness there was no starlight for this poor fragile Barbara.

My eyes met her face as I flung the letter on the grass. She looked heart-broken.

"But, Barbara, *surely* he was not heartless enough to leave you these letters to read!"

"I found them, Miss Carstairs. He came here for a minute again yesterday, on his way to the station. I— I— it was very wrong and foolish—but I buried my face in the grass when he was gone, and did

not look up until I heard the train passing. Then I saw a letter lying behind the tree stump; it must have fallen from his pocket."

"Oh, Barbara!" I said, "it was not honourable——"

She started forward with clasped hands, a painful flush burning in her cheeks. "Don't!"—it was almost a sob—"don't blame me! I know what you would say. It was not right to read what did not belong to me; but as true as that we are both standing here, Miss Nora, I thought it was a letter left for me by him—a written farewell. As I opened it, another letter fell out; and then I saw my own name; and—and I don't quite think I knew what I did."

"Barbara! Barbara!"

It was her mother's voice, calling home her "ae lamb"—calling her from the cottage door beyond the bridge on the hill-side.

"Yes, mother; I am coming. If I had not seen it in his own writing," she went on rapidly to me, "an angel from Heaven could not have made me believe it."

The tears were running down her half-averted cheeks, like rain.

"I have seen children play with a ball," she went on, nervously lacing and unlacing her slender fingers—"toss it here and toss it there, and then throw it over the wall altogether when they were tired of it. And that is how he has played with me. Oh, Miss Nora!" (and with her dilated eyes and firmly-set lips the girl looked ten years older) "if George Renwick ever asks mercy at my hands—and something seems to tell me that he *will*—may I remember this day! But it is killing me; it is killing me! Oh George, George!"

And it seemed that I had no comfort to give.

"If he had not done it so deliberately and heartlessly!" she sobbed. "How had I ever injured him, that he should make sport of me?"

"Barbara, child, this is at the best but a cruel theme; but I would say to you, do not, for your own sake, take up a worse notion of it than it deserves. I believe he is truly attached to you; but you know he is a man of fashion, moving in a high sphere; and his wife, when he shall marry, must be chosen in accordance with this. Ah, my dear, forgive him if you can, and try to put this unfortunate episode out of your life. Revenge is for the wicked; forgiveness for the meek!"

Her pretty head was bowed like a bending flower; her face had never shone with so holy a light as it did then. It was the first grand struggle between the good and evil angels of her life; and—thanks to Him who giveth the victory!—the good one conquered. All the hardness melted out of her face as she took my hand, and when she kissed it, I felt it wet with her tears.

"Barbara! Barbara!" cried her mother, more impatiently than before.

"Dear mother, I am coming. Yes, I will strive to put it out of my life," she said to me, the tears streaming down her cheeks. "But—

Miss Carstairs"—a vivid red flushing her face—"you will please to forget it, too."

"I will, Barbara."

"My mother must not suspect it. Or—or your people."

"*No* one shall know it or suspect it, Barbara. No one in the whole wide world. It is already an event of the past."

Drying her eyes, timidly giving a pressure to my hand, she hid the fatal letters in her bosom, and darted away to join her mother.

And so ended the heart's romance of Barbara Earle.

Chapter II.

Sure this three days' fête; this fancy fair; this magnificent entertainment, in which all devices of pleasure seem to have been ransacked to entertain its guests, had never had its compeer at Richmond. The benevolent nobleman, Lord Seanet, who had organised it in the cause of charity, had thrown open his house, on the banks of the Thames, and its magnificent grounds to all the world.

What it seemed to other people, I know not. To me it was fairy-land. Especially after my long, long exile abroad with my delicate mother, for whom England's climate had been pronounced too cold. Ten years had elapsed since the painful episode I have told of. Close upon that, in the same autumn, my mother's health failed; she gave up the old home near Olney to the heir, her eldest son, and went abroad to a warmer place. It was ten years ago, I say; ten years! And, until now I had never been back in England.

Crowds were floating around me; moving ever from one gorgeous scene to another; from the motley entertainments within doors to the sylvan glades and green alleys without. Groups of beautiful women in laces, silks, muslins, glittering with jewels like a flower-bed with dew, jostled each other. To pass along in the throng was no easy matter. I had lost my friend who came with me, and with whom I was staying in town, and wanted to find her—Mrs. Knox.

Trying to take it coolly, and moving along as I best could, a lovely face flashed out of the swaying throng. A perfect face: notably sweet even among the galaxy of beauties which the cause of the sick and wounded had drawn together. And it reminded me of some face I had seen before. She was a young, elegant, well-dressed woman, whose manners were charmingly fascinating, perhaps because they were so modest and full of repose. But, gazing at her, I got involved in a jam. Mercy me! was I going to be crushed to a pancake?

I quite believe I should have been; but, at a little cry I gave, this same lady stretched forth a helping hand and extricated me; drawing me safely through a loop-hole in the crowd, at the risk of leaving my

drapery, like a hostage, on the other side. Ah! the relief it was to be a little quiet, and breathe pure air again! While I drew a deep breath and settled my plumage, like a ruffled pigeon, I was feasting my eyes on the fair face of my deliverer. Such a piquant, sparkling face, with its fine straight brows, telling of truth, its brown, soft, brilliant eyes, and its placid, delicate mouth. Neither pearl-powder nor rouge lay there: the delicate complexion, on which a fresh blush was ever dawning, needed it not. Who she was I knew not; but I enjoyed her fresh, pure, lovely face as we enjoy a fine picture.

"Oh, thank you," I said. "You have really done me a service. What a crowd it is!"

"Yes, indeed. And I hope we shall all buy largely to recompense Lord Seanet for his liberality and trouble. He wants to get five or six thousand pounds for the fund: and what is short he will supply himself."

Again, in the voice there seemed to be something not quite strange to me. It was low, gentle, earnest. I had rarely taken to anyone at first sight as I took to this woman.

"Why, Nora! I have been looking for you everywhere.—And you for me, I suppose! How do you do, Mrs. Trevelyan?"

Mrs. Knox, who was the speaker, held out her hand to the stranger, and introduced us: "Miss Carstairs, Mrs. Trevelyan."

"If this lady had not been kind enough to rescue me, I think I should have dropped down in sheer desperation, like the heathens before the car of Juggernaut, and let them trample me to death."

Some ladies came up, known apparently to both my companions, and said they were on their way to the art gallery. For, paintings and objects of art had been sent to Lord Seanet, lent, or as contributions for sale. We moved along with them.

"Who is Mrs. Trevelyan?" I asked of Mrs. Knox, drawing her aside as we walked.

"A rich widow, my dear, and a most charming, loveable woman."

"A widow! Why, she is quite young."

"Four or five-and-twenty, I should say. She has been a widow these two years, and is childless."

"Do you know of what county she is? She puts me so much in mind of some one or other that I must have seen before."

"Devonshire. Here we are."

The gallery was crowded—like every other place. If it had been cool, and we could have strolled leisurely from picture to picture, with our catalogues and our fans, I should have thoroughly enjoyed it; but we were not salamanders.

"This makes me sea-sick, mon ami," said I, with my handkerchief to my lips, and my hand on the shoulder of little Charley Knox.

"*That* might," said Mrs. Trevelyan, answering for the lad, and

pointing to a sea-view, with its lowering sky and green tumultuous waves. "A fine opportunity to 'suffer and be strong,'" she added, laughing.

But, when the face was not illuminated with either laugh or smile, a subdued expression pervaded its repose; as if the owner had known sadness. Turning from the sea-view, I caught the fine form, the handsome face of George Renwick—Captain Renwick now. Getting weary of his wanderings, he had entered the army, had gained some laurels abroad, and was now home again. It was ten years since he had held my hands in the sunshine amid the sweet summer stillness at the wicket of the miller's garden. Ten long, eventful years; and, until this summer, I had not seen him since. His letters to me were shy at first, because of the coolness and contempt apparent in mine; but now that he had come home after a ball in his breast and with the traces of suffering in his handsome face, my heart was melted. I had never seen him otherwise than in high health and spirits; and although I knew he deserved all he was suffering and much more, the contrast was so painful that I was heartily sorry for him. George was staying with Mrs. Knox since a week past; and, morning after morning, as he wound my silks, read Tennyson to me, or listened to my homilies with a half-languid smile, it grieved me to see what noble elements were lying fallow in him; elements which, with self-discipline and purer motives, would have made him, nay, would make him yet, a very king among his fellows.

George was staring at the paintings and water-colours on the walls, making remarks upon them to some friend who had entered with him. A tall, ungainly, plain man, whom I recognized almost directly for Harry Burnham. The sight of the two together brought back to my memory the past days, when George had stolen the heart of the Wild Rose of Olney, and had left those bitter letters behind him as a legacy. I sighed, as I always did when I thought of Barbara, and had nearly fallen into a reverie, when Mrs. Trevelyan's fan dropped out of her hand. She picked it up, and drew me towards a small picture in the corner—quite hidden, like a lesser light, in the glory of the surrounding art-treasures. The crowd seemed to overlook it, she remarked; and in truth it was but in an obscure place. I turned to it with her. I—why! what—what was this?—this exquisite picture? A young girl, a fair, childish girl, with glorious eyes and a face as pure as an angel's, was leaning against a rail by a river bank, eagerly reading a letter; another letter lay among the lilies, and the sunlight was turning the running water to gold. The colours were limpid and soft; the details well finished; but the face of the little maiden moved me more than all. Those clear brown eyes, the wave of the hair about the brow, the sweet fresh mouth! Memory had risen like a rushing stream, and overflowed its banks; and, borne on its tide, I was drifting once more through long-forgotten Yorkshire scenes. Once more I heard the clatter of the mill

and caught the cheery voices of the miller and his men; once more I was standing in the glen, watching the light figure of Barbara dart away up the mossy slope and disappear in the shadow of the hill-side.

Mrs. Trevelyan was looking at me, with her lips slightly parted, an eager interest in her luminous eyes. An odd, tremulous something was fluttering in and out her face, like the flicker of fire-light on a statue when the night is falling. Paler than usual, and with that inexplicable expression in her eyes, I thought of Barbara. I almost said "Barbara!" with dry lips, as I bent towards her in the dense crowd. Light had flashed upon me like a revelation.

But she only whispered—"I am faint with the heat;" and, dropping her mantle from her shoulders, gathered it—a shining mass of scarlet and white—upon her arm, as she passed to a painting styled "The Roll-call of the Last Victims"—which the reader will of course not confound with that picture called "The Roll-call," of later days. Almost at the same moment, George and Mr. Burnham came up to look at the same painting. That was their ostensible object; their true one was to gaze at the beautiful woman, Mrs. Trevelyan.

"You are looking pale, Nora," he whispered to me. "What is it?"

Mrs. Trevelyan was gazing steadily at the foremost figure in the picture, the sadness of the despairing face seeming to be reflected on her own. Touching her on the arm, waiting for no permission, I introduced her to Captain Renwick. A movement of the crowd swayed me onwards; and when I at length got back to them they were conversing together quietly upon indifferent topics.

"Shall we go to the fancy fair?" I asked. "It may be less crowded there."

"Yes," she answered, smiling. "I want to get rid of the money that is weighing down my pockets."

Ere the words had well left her lips, a tall, noble-looking man, of some two-and-thirty years, pushed his way through the crowd and took Mrs. Trevelyan on his arm as though he had a right to appropriate her. George looked daggers at him.

"Who the impudence is he?"

"It is Sir Charles St. Aubyn, member for R——," answered Burnham. "Report says that he is to marry Mrs. Trevelyan."

George looked after the queenly little head and the graceful figure, with the mass of scarlet and white trailing over its arm. The tall baronet was bending over her and talking earnestly.

"I wanted to ask a quiet question or two, Nora. Who is that lady? And where does she come from?"

"From Devonshire, I believe. She is Mrs. Trevelyan."

"Is that all you know of her?"

"Yes."

George's eyes chanced to fall just then upon the small picture that had so moved me. He stood gazing at it, never speaking, and came away with a strange look on his face.

We got into the fancy fair at last, George leaving me with Mrs. Knox. Burnham started up at the door, like an Indian out of ambush. The twain sauntered off together, and were lost in the crowd about the entrance of the Turkish Divan.

When our purses had been considerably lightened, and Captain Renwick and Burnham, having joined us, had been what they called "cleared out," we all strolled to the gipsy encampment, Mrs. Trevelyan side by side with me. Sir Charles had disappeared. Here Miss Augusta Hamilton, the "divine Augusta" of George's early devotion (now a setting star, brilliant even in its decline), was telling fortunes in the dim religious light of a tent; and, what with streaming hair and Oriental tints, she made a capital gipsy. Mrs. Trevelyan and the captain crossed her palm with silver, and she began to unravel the web of fate. To the lovely young widow she predicted a proposal from a cavalry officer before the June roses had faded; and to George, who was watching her with a half-mocking smile, she prophesied a coming letter, which would either make or mar his happiness.

But when the gipsy, guided by something more reliable than mere imagination, went on with quiet malice to unfold the history of George's many loves (as Leporello in the opera shakes out the long list of his master's sweethearts), the gallant captain did not seem to relish it, and would fain have bowed us out of the tent without much waste of ceremony. Harry Burnham laughed and shrugged his shoulders; but Mrs. Trevelyan glanced up at me from under her silky lashes with a look which was more sad than mirthful. Memory was busy with her.

Eating water-ices together, ten minutes later, I felt sick and chilly; and standing in the draught on the damp steps, waiting for the carriage to drive round, did not mend the matter. I caught a bad cold: this English climate is but a treacherous one, especially to those who have sojourned long under more genial skies.

II.

I had to lie in bed for a week; to keep the house for another week. Mrs. Knox, sister to my brother's wife at Olney, was very kind; but she would not let me run any risk. George had settled himself in club-chambers then, but came to Eaton Place often, and sent me up bouquets.

And Mrs. Trevelyan? She had made a bonâ fide conquest of one erring, elastic heart. The fowler who had snared so many birds was caught at last in the net of this woman, with the sweet voice, the sweeter face, and the true and pure heart. George had been haunting her these two weeks like a shadow. George Renwick loved at last.

The first time I saw them together after my illness was at a night fête at the Botanical Gardens: that fairyland of green and gold, with its wide-spreading plants, its broad walks, its water, its brilliant lights and its Eastern flowers.

The soft music of the band rose and fell, a soft light made the beautiful girls on every side look like fair bisque statues among the trees. It haunts me yet, like an Oriental dream. I was bending over a table, examining some curious specimens of coloured foliage, when I saw Captain Renwick come slowly round the margin of the basin with Mrs. Trevelyan on his arm. She might have been mistaken for the nymph of the lake from the spray of waxen flowers in her hair, the misty whiteness of her lace dress, and the brilliants which sparkled about her like drops of water. She had a bouquet of roses and heliotropes in her gloved hand, and, with her rich bloom and her bright, soft eyes, looked inexpressibly lovely.

They came slowly onwards, and she sat down on a rustic seat. The captain bent over her; and I'll venture to say he never rode up to possible death with a soberer face than he wore just then. He was talking hesitatingly, shyly, like a great school-boy, and with actually a bashful blush upon his bronzed cheek, blundering out something about his hopes and his heart.

Later on in the evening, I saw her alone. Her face was flushed; her hands were cold; her delicate lips were quivering with suppressed emotion. George came up to me, looking pale and tired, very subdued for him, and gave me his arm. I could not help asking what news he had had.

"None, as yet," was the brief answer. "She said she would give it me later—and sent me away."

But the answer came presently in the shape of a letter. Of all people, who should bring it but Burnham! "Mrs. Trevelyan asked me to give you this," said he, leaving it with George.

He opened the envelope; he *could not* wait to know his fate. Ah, never in all his life had George Renwick been so thoroughly in earnest. Out of it dropped two yellow letters, and a few words written in pencil:

"The enclosed are returned to Captain Renwick, with the regrets of BARBARA EARLE TREVELYAN."

"What!" cried George Renwick, springing to his feet, and staring at the papers in his trembling hand. He was flushed to the very temples, more excited than I had ever seen him before, and he could not understand it all at once. His face took a deathly hue.

"Did you never suspect that she was Barbara Earle, George?"

"Never, so help me Heaven!" he gasped in a hoarse whisper. "It's true she reminded me of Barbara at times; but—how could I suspect

they were the same? The little simple village maiden grown into this most stately woman!" And, gathering the letters up in his hands, he rushed out of the gardens.

Mrs. Trevelyan saw him go, and came up.

"Did you not know me, Miss Carstairs?" she asked, gently laying her hand upon mine.

"Yes. I managed to find you out that day at Richmond. But the change is great: no wonder George Renwick did not."

"A very short while after you left Olney, my mother came into some property, and we went to live amid her relatives in Devonshire, close on the borders of Cornwall. She procured for me those advantages of education which her previous slender purse had denied. At twenty years of age I married Mr. Trevelyan, an old man, very rich. There you have my history. My poor mother is dead."

"And—shall you refuse him, Barbara?"

"Those letters were my refusal."

"You will not forgive?"

"It is not a question of forgiving. I forgave him long ago, but I have no love for him now. Love's fire, once raked out, can never be re-lighted. Heaven alone knows what his desertion cost me in those old days: sometimes I wonder that I lived through it."

"Then there's no hope for him?"

"None. I marry one who has my best and truest affection: Sir Charles St. Aubyn."

"Barbara, who painted that picture?"

"A poor travelling artist who came to Olney. I described to him how I should like it taken."

"The carriage has been waiting for hours, Nora."

I rose at Mrs. Knox's summons, shaking hands with Barbara. "We can still be friends—can we not, Barbara?" I whispered.

"Friends, yes: with you and with him too," she answered, with a warm pressure and her sweet smile. "I am willing to forget if he is."

George was lingering in the crowd outside the gate and saw us. He put my arm within his. "This has been a blow to-night, Nora. I hears he marries that St. Aubyn."

"Yes, a blow; you gave her one once, you know. She would like to forget and forgive, and to be friends with us in future."

"I wonder whether *you* would have me, Nora?"

"Go along, George, and don't talk nonsense."

But I am not quite sure that it will turn out to be altogether nonsense in the future. Meanwhile, I am the nearest and dearest friend of Lady St. Aubyn—as I was once the early friend of sweet little Barbara Earle.

PAGANINI.

TOWARDS the afternoon of a hot July day in the early part of this century there rattled through the streets of Ferrara a post-carriage, drawn by four horses. It drew up before the principal hotel in the place. The postilion sprang to the ground, and threw coverings over his smoking cattle. A waiter hurried out and opened the carriage door. An excited Englishman came forth from under a mountain of rugs, and, seizing hold of the man by the arm, exclaimed: "Is he here still? Is it too late? Are we in time?"

The startled waiter stammered "Who here? Whom do you seek, Milord?" A young lady, who stepped out of the carriage after the gentleman, came to his aid, crying, in enthusiastic tones, "Ah! My father means the great Paganini, who was to have given a concert here to-day. Is he still in the town? And does he really play to-day?"

"At your service, Signora," answered the relieved waiter. "All Ferrara is in an uproar, for he has promised a concert for this evening."

The Englishman drew a handful of money out of his pocket; threw the postilion a splendid reward for his hot and hasty journey, and giving the waiter some gold pieces, and orders to buy tickets for himself and his daughter for the evening's entertainment, he ascended the hotel steps, followed by the young lady; piles of luggage being borne up after them.

The name of Paganini was at that time a household word in Italy. The fame of this man as a wonderful musician had spread with amazing rapidity. He was born at Genoa, on the nineteenth of February, in the year 1784. It is said that his mother foresaw his future renown in a vision. In his sixth year, the boy played violin solos in the church, and, when nine years old, he stepped on the boards of a theatre for the first time. His principal teacher was Allessandro Stella, of Parma, but he was also taught by Ghiretti, and others. When but thirteen years old he made an artistic tour through Lombardy; and, at fourteen, he gave concerts on his own account. At twenty, he stood on the pinnacle of fame as a violin player; but, from that time forward, except when he made his triumphal journeys through Europe, his life was very much veiled in mystery, as regards the outer world. He continually disappeared for months together, leaving no trace or clue by which his whereabouts could be discovered, and then, again, as suddenly as he had vanished, he would reappear; now here, now there, but always where he was least expected: and, before again hiding himself, would give a few concerts—three, or, at the most, four.

There were, of course, various theories afloat as to his private history. Many of his admirers warmly upheld it as their opinion that he was in reality an angel sent down to this world, in pity, for the purpose of lightening the miseries of earthly life by giving man a foretaste of what the heavenly harmonies will be hereafter. They said, with truth, that it was as if a choir of sweet-voiced spirits lay hid within the instrument, and that, at times, it seemed as though this choir turned into a grand orchestra. In further support of this opinion, they said that Paganini lived on air, or, at most, a little herb-tea. On the other hand, his detractors hinted that his private life was a most ill-regulated one, and that, far from living upon air, he ate in a ravenous and almost brutal manner, although he at times chastised himself with long fastings, by which he had ruined his health.

Paganini's detractors further stated that he despised all forms of religion, and never put his foot upon consecrated ground. Some declared that he had a league with Satan, and held interviews with him in an old Florentine castle, much frequented by the artist, from which, they said, fearful sounds were heard proceeding on stormy nights, and where the great master was known to have lain as one dead, for hours together, on different occasions. These persons believed that at such times Paganini had only come back to life by magical agency. In all probability what gave rise to this latter story is the fact that Paganini destroyed his health and nervous system by continual use of Leroy's so-called life elixir. He was, at any rate, credited liberally by some with dealings in the black art. His glance was said to be irresistible, and to partake of some of the qualities ascribed to the evil eye. A flower girl told how she had met him one day in a lonely neighbourhood, and had remained standing still as one fascinated—as a bird is petrified by the gaze of a serpent—while he paced up and down before her, declaiming loudly, and bursting into fits of demoniacal laughter. Another swore to having seen a tall dark shadow bending over him at one of his concerts, and directing his hand; while a third testified that he had seen nine or ten shadowy hands hovering about the strings of the great master's violin.

But all these rumours only increased the fame and attractions of this wonderful man. When it became known that he was about to give a concert at Ferrara, visitors streamed thither from all directions, consumed with feverish impatience to accomplish their various journeys; half dreading lest, on their arrival, they should learn that the man they sought had again disappeared. Amongst the rest came the pair of English travellers, with the scene of whose arrival this sketch opened. They rested but for a few hours, and then hastened early to the theatre, in order to secure their places. The house was, of course, thronged; but the expectant audience was at first bitterly disappointed. A favourite singer had promised Paganini her aid in

the evening's performance; but, at the last moment, had left him shamefully in the lurch. To fill the gap caused by her absence, the violinist had engaged a young dancer, who had a tolerable voice, and undertook to sing a few light pieces at the beginning of the entertainment. The more she endeavoured to give satisfaction, however, the more the disappointed public hissed and hooted her down, until at last, in despair, the girl ran away, and took refuge behind the curtain.

As soon as she disappeared a breathless silence fell upon the whole house. The audience waited, with strained nerves, for the master's appearance, prepared to give him an enthusiastic reception. But some evil fortune seemed to pursue the spoiled favourite on this particular evening. Like some shadow out of the demon world, a lean, gaunt, haggard figure slipped from behind the curtain. All held their breath. His strange appearance was familiar to his admirers; the wan thin face, with pale cheeks, framed in long black hair hanging wildly about; the features, continually twisted into some grimace; the sharp hooked nose; the dull, lurking, half-quenched glow in the eyes, buried under dark brows; the unsteady gait, as though the man were weak and powerless, and might, at any moment, bend or break in two like some tender reed; the strange scornful smile, hovering constantly about the ill-tutored lips;—for all this they were prepared; his picture hung in every shop and public place. They in a manner reverenced his peculiarities; viewing them with a sort of shudder of half pity, half horror; but, to-day, an additional and unexpected peculiarity distinguished him. He had wounded his foot with a nail in Livorno, from whence he had come; and, in place of gliding to his place like a ghost, as usual, he hobbled awkwardly across to his desk. The ludicrous appearance he made proved irresistible. In place of the storm of applause that usually greeted him, he was met by smothered, and then immoderate, bursts of laughter. The most enthusiastic of those present endeavoured to drown the ridicule by loud cheering, and finding this impossible fell into extravagant anger—our two English visitors being amongst the most angry—until the uproar became tremendous, and promised to be endless.

On a sudden, however, all again grew hushed into silence, as though influenced by the moving of a magic wand: as, indeed, they were.

By a violent effort Paganini composed himself, and grasped his violin. The frail, wavering figure straightened itself and became imposing. Every muscle was strained to its utmost tension. His eyes shone like stars of glowing fire. As though made of brass, his nervous fingers clenched his instrument, while the bow in his other hand moved like a powerful sword over the strings, drawing from them a tone so soft, so etheeral, so ravishing, and withal so sharp and clear, that it is hard to describe the listeners' sensations otherwise

than by the term, an agony of pleasure; for all their diverse feelings were comprised in this.

This keen, heart-stirring tone hovered in the air like a clear, trembling star for a little space of time, and then the powerful fingers moved, the bow flashed up and down like lightning over the strings. It was as if that first keen tone had distilled itself into a rain of soft, refreshing notes; as though the star had burst, and fallen to the ground in beauteous fragments. Paganini kept his audience on entranced from that moment. Melting passages, in which harp-like tones blended, were exchanged for full sounds as of a mighty host of instruments, in which the waves of melody roared and jostled against each other in their exuberance. All eyes were drawn, as by a magnet, to the wonderful player. No sound came through the whole house to disturb the attention of the audience; except, now and then, that of a hysterical, smothered sob, which gave evidence of some overstrained and excited nerves.

When the music had ceased those present still sat on, as if under an enchanted tree, silent and scarcely breathing; but when Paganini bowed, with a malicious smile curling up his lips, the enthusiasm of delight manifested knew no limits. It was as if an earthquake shook the house. The musician had nobly revenged himself upon the public, and had forced them to admire in place of ridiculing him. But his soul hankered after a revenge of a different sort. He hobbled to the very front of the platform, with his violin still in his hand. He lifted his bow and stooped to begin afresh.

Breathless stillness, as before. From the magical instrument there suddenly burst out a perfect simulation of a donkey's bray: "E—ah! E—ah!" No ass in the country could have done it better. Everyone looked at everyone else in horrified surprise. The musician bowed again, and, with his cynical smile still on his lips, said "This for those who hissed before, and laughed!"

The result was electrical. The enthusiasts applauded, clapped, and laughed, but the greater number of those present burst into a storm of wrath, filling the air with abusive epithets. The Ferrarese in the house took the joke as specially personal to them, as it was very much the custom of the surrounding aristocracy to nickname the city-folk asses, and to greet them with "E—ahs," when it was their pleasure to insult them.

Long after Paganini had taken refuge in his hotel, and had locked himself up from all the world, as was his custom, the storm he had raised still raged within the theatre. The police had at last to interfere between the two parties. With wounded bodies, and torn clothes, the greater number of those present left the building; watches, chains, and all other ornaments having, in most cases, disappeared totally. Lord M—— and his daughter were of course amongst those whose

admiration and reverence for the great master had only been increased by the night's occurrences. Amongst all his enthusiastic followers, they were, perhaps, the very warmest and most devoted.

At the table d'hôte next day, the conversation naturally turned entirely on the previous evening's entertainment. The greater number of voices were united in condemning the musician for his joke, and in criticising his whole character and behaviour severely. Lord M—— observed that a middle-aged gentlemen sitting opposite to him seemed continually about to take part in the conversation, but as often checked himself with a visible effort. At last, when some very censorious remarks were made on Paganini, he burst out into vehement defence, as though he were well acquainted with everything concerning the musician's private life. His whole air and manner was that of one who says to himself inwardly, "If you all knew what I know, you would not talk so foolishly."

When dinner was over, Lord M—— succeeded in establishing an acquaintance with this gentleman; and, during subsequent intercourse, he was induced to confide many interesting particulars concerning Paganini to the nobleman and Lady Arabella.

He told how he had first made acquaintance with the genius. He was at a wedding one day in Florence, and, in the evening, he and the other guests were amusing themselves with jests and laughter on the banks of the Arno. Music and song also beguiled the time, and he was sitting down, playing on a guitar to a circle of admiring listeners, when on a sudden, with a cry of affright, the little company started aside, surprised at the appearance of a tall, pale man, with black dishevelled hair flying about him, and with wild, gleaming eyes. This strange figure strode up to the player, took the instrument from his astonished hand, and began to play in his turn, gesticulating excitedly the while. The music he brought forth seemed to those who listened perfectly divine; but with a harsh chord he suddenly broke off, and, as if in an access of rage, dashed the guitar to pieces against a tree, and then disappeared as quickly as he had appeared, and as unexpectedly.

The following day the wedding guests learned that their strange entertainer was Paganini, whom the Grand Duchess had bidden to the Court to give a concert. It may be imagined how carefully the teller of the tale treasured up the broken fragments of the guitar. He was as much surprised as pleased a few days later, when the great master came to him with an apology for the odd jest he had played, and offering a liberal recompense for the harm done. This latter was naturally refused; but a friendship between the two, thus strangely brought together, was the result of the interview. They travelled about continually in company, and the musician had received trusty service from Lord M ——'s new acquaintance, and had given him his fullest confidence. This latter entreated the nobleman and his daughte

not to give credence to the many tales circulated to the disadvantage and discredit of his friend. Knowing that he spoke to trustworthy ears and sympathising hearts, he confided to them the true secret of the great master's strongly developed peculiarities and misanthropy.

While at the Florentine Court, a certain noble lady had conceived for him a violent passion, which caused him much discomfort. It was entirely and exclusively on her side, his heart being given to a lovely young girl, the daughter of a rich merchant in the city. She was also much attached to him. Unfortunately, she betrayed her feelings one evening at one of Paganini's concerts. During an effective pause made by him in playing, she heaved a deep sigh. Tears streamed from her eyes, and she was near fainting. Her lover betrayed uneasiness concerning her; and went to the front of the boards, looking towards where she sat. Everyone saw the two exchange glances.

Suddenly a strange gentleman made his way to the young girl's side, took her hand, and whispered some words into her ear. She grew deadly pale, but allowed him to lead her away. A few curious persons crept out after the pair, and saw them driving quickly away in a black carriage. Whither they went is unknown, but the girl was seen no more in Florence. Nearly everyone laid the blame of her disappearance on Paganini. Two of the girl's relations challenged him on her account. He stabbed them both, one after the other. Later, he also disappeared mysteriously for a very lengthened period. His friend vowed never to rest until he had found him out; and at last, after three years' searching, he discovered him imprisoned in a castle in Tuscany belonging to some relatives of the lost girl. He was confined in a gloomy dungeon; his only furniture a broken table, an old chair, a miserable bed, and a water jug; his only solace some writing materials, which he had made use of in putting on paper many musical compositions, and his beloved violin, of which, however, every string but one had, by degrees, become useless. Nevertheless, he contrived still to play on this one string, so as to delight his own heart, and the hearts of all who listened to him. His jailors were so much attached to him that it was with their connivance that his friend succeeded in releasing him from his sad captivity.

Lord M—— and Lady Arabella so entreated of their new acquaintance to get them a personal interview with Paganini, that at last he did what he could to please them by introducing them secretly into a garden where he knew his friend was and, whence he could not easily escape. It was late in the evening, and was growing dusk, but they could see the musician listlessly stretched at full length upon the grass, with his back turned to them.

At some slight noise, however, which betrayed their presence, he started hastily up, drew the loose cloak he wore over his face, and with one bound disappeared from their sight into a sheltering grove of trees

Paganini died at the age of fifty-six, in the year 1840, after a year of painful wasting sickness. It was in the night of the 27th of May that he breathed his last. He awoke suddenly out of a peaceful sleep, feeling refreshed, and, as he thought, re-invigorated. He drew aside the curtain of his bed and looked out into the night. His windows were open, and the soft balmy Italian air was filling all the room with sweet freshness. The moon had risen, and was pouring a flood of light across his bed, but his eyes were dim, and to him everything seemed overshadowed. He stretched out his hand, we are told, and grasped his beloved violin, which always lay beside him. He took up his bow, and endeavoured to bring some sound out of the instrument. But the magic power and strength had left his fingers; and, when he found that his efforts were in vain, he fell back on his pillow broken-hearted, and sighed his soul away.

1876.

Welcome the baby year! Behold him crowned
With youth, and hope, and promise of the Spring.
The past is dead, his latest whisper drowned
In loyal shouts that hailed another king;
And he, to whom our canticles resound,
What does he bring?

New joys, new aims, our eager hearts reply,
Elate with hope, and glad with social mirth,
A thousand blessings,—aye, and ere he die,
Fulness and plenty to the waiting earth;
With nobler fruit of aspirations high,
Born with his birth.

Ah, fair new year, be kind to those we love,
And to us all more fraught with joy than woe;
Thou comest pure and stainless from above,
Alas! Thou wilt not pure and stainless go.
Yet, welcome! Blest and happy thou canst prove;
God grant it so.

S. E. G.

M. ELLEN EDWARDS J. SWAIN.

IN THE BALL-ROOM.

THE ARGOSY.

FEBRUARY, 1876.

EDINA.

By Mrs. HENRY WOOD, Author of "East Lynne."

CHAPTER IV.

WAITING FOR BELL.

THE fire threw its glow on Mrs. Bell's kitchen—kitchen and sitting-room in one—lighting up the strip of bright-coloured carpet before the fender, and the red tiles of the floor; playing on the plates and dishes on the dresser-shelves and on the blue hyacinth glasses in the window, now closed in by its outside shutters. Stout Mrs. Bell, her cheeks as red as the fire, sat by the round table in her white apron and mob cap, plying her knitting-needles. On the other side of the hearth sat a neighbour, one Nancy Tomson, a tall, thin woman in a check apron, with projecting teeth and a high nose, who had come in for a chat. On the table waited the supper—bread and cheese—and a candle ready to be lighted.

The clock struck nine. Mrs. Bell looked up as though the sound half startled her.

"Who'd ha' thought it!" cried the visitor, whose tongue had been going incessantly for the last hour, causing the time to pass quickly. "Be that clock too fast, Dame Bell?"

"No," said the dame. "It's right by the church."

"Well, I'd never ha' said it were nine. Your folks *is* late. I wonder where they be?"

"No need to wonder," returned Mrs. Bell, in a sharp tone, meant for the absentees. "Rosaline's staying with that poor Granny Sandon, who seems to get nobody else to help her. As to Bell, he is off again to the Golden Shaft."

"You said he had been in."

"He did come in: and I thought he had come for good. But he didn't stay a minute; he must needs tramp out again. And he was

further gone then, Nancy Tomson, than I've seen him these three years."

Mrs. Bell exercised her needles vigorously, as if her temper had got into her fingers. The visitor plunged into a renewed sea of conversation—which had chiefly turned upon that interesting episode, the evening fight between Janes and his wife. At half-past nine, Mrs. Bell put down her knitting and rose from her seat. She was growing uneasy.

"What *can* keep Rosaline? She'd never stay out so late as this, let Granny Sandon want her ever so. I'll take a look out and see if I can see her."

Unbolting the door she pulled it open, admitting a flood of pale moonlight: pale compared with the ruddier glow of the fire. Mrs. Bell peered out across the Bare Plain in the direction of Trennach; and Nancy Tomson, who was always ready for any divertissement, came forward and stretched her long neck over Mrs. Bell's shoulder.

"It's a rare light night," she said. "But I don't see nobody coming, Dame Bell. They topers sticks to it."

Feeling the air cold after her place by the hot fire, Nancy Tomson withdrew indoors again. She was in no hurry to be gone. Her husband made one of the topers to-night, and this warm domicile was pleasanter than her own. Dame Bell was about to shut the door, when a faint sound, something like a suppressed moan, caused her to look quickly out again, and to advance somewhat farther than she did before. Sitting against the wall on the other side the window was a dark object: and, to Mrs. Bell's intense surprise, she discovered it to be Rosaline.

Rosaline, in what appeared to be the very utmost abandonment of grief or of terror. Her hands were clasping her raised knees, her face was bent upon them. Every low breath she took seemed to come forth with a suppressed moan of anguish.

"Why, child, what on earth's the matter?" ejaculated the mother. "What are you sitting down there for?"

The words quickly brought out Nancy Tomson. Whose exclamations of wonder, when she saw Rosaline, might have been nearly heard at Trennach.

Rosaline's moans had subsided into silence. She slowly got up, they putting forth their hands to help her, and went indoors. Her face was white as that of the dead and appeared to have a nameless horror in it. Down she sat on the first chair she came to, put her arms on the table, and her head upon them, so that her countenance was hidden. The two women, closing the front door, stood gazing at her with the most intense curiosity.

"She has been frighted," whispered Nancy Tomson. And it did indeed look like it. Mrs. Bell dissented, however.

"Frighted! What is there to frighten her? What's the matter,

Rosaline?" she continued, somewhat sharply. "Be you struck mooney, child?"

Nancy Tomson was one who liked her own opinion, and she held to the fright. She advanced a step or two nearer Rosaline, dropping her voice to a low key.

"Have you seen anything o' Dan Sandon? Maybe his ghost showed itself to you as you came by the Bottomless Shaft?"

The words sent Rosaline into a desperate fit of trembling: so much so that her arms caused the table, which was not very substantial, to shake as they lay upon it.

"Then just you tell us what else it is," pursued Nancy Tomson, eager for an answer—for Rosaline had made a motion in the negative as to Dan Sandon's ghost. "Sure," added the woman to Mrs. Bell, "sure Janes and her be not a-fighting again! Sure he haven't been and killed her! Is it *that* that have frighted you, Rosaline?"

"No, no," murmured Rosaline.

"Well, it must be something," urged the woman, half rampant with curiosity. "One can't be frighted to death for nothing."

A notion, like a flash of light, seized upon Mrs. Bell. And it seemed to her so certain to be the true one that she only wondered she had not thought of it before. She laid her hand upon her daughter's shoulder.

"Rosaline! You have heard the Seven Whistlers!"

A slight pause. Rosaline neither stirred nor spoke. To Nancy Tomson the suggestion cleared up the mystery.

"*That's it*," she cried, emphatically. "Where was my wits, I wonder, that I never remembered they? Now don't you go for to deny it, Rosaline Bell: you have been hearing they Seven Whistlers."

Another pause. A shiver. And then Rosaline slowly lifted her white face.

"Yes," she answered. "The Seven Whistlers." And the avowal struck so much consternation on her two hearers, although the suggestion had first come from them, that they became dumb.

"Father heard them, you know," went on Rosaline, with a look of terror in her eyes, and an absent sound in her voice as though she were dreaming. "Father heard them. And they bode ill-luck."

"They bode death: as some says," spoke Nancy Tomson, lowering her voice to an appropriate key.

"Yes," repeated Rosaline, in a tone of grievous wailing. "Yes: they bode death. Oh mother! mother!"

But now, Mrs. Bell, although given, like her neighbours, to put some faith in the Seven Whistlers; for example is contagious; was by no means one to be overcome with the fear of them. Rather was the superstition regarded by her as a prolific theme for talk and gossip, and she entirely disapproved of the men's making it an excuse for idleness;

had she heard the Whistlers with her own ears, it would not have moved her much. Of course she did not particularly like the Whistlers; she was willing to believe that they were in some mysterious way the harbingers of ill-luck: but for anybody to be put into an alarming state of terror by them, as was now displayed by Rosaline, she looked upon as altogether absurd and unreasonable.

"Don't take on like that, child!" rebuked she. "You must be silly. They don't bode *your* death: never fear. I'll warm you a sup o' pea-soup. There's some left in the crock."

She bustled into the back kitchen after the soup and a saucepan. Rosaline kept her head down: deep, laboured breathings, as of one who has run beyond his strength, agitating her. Nancy Tomson stood looking on, her arms folded in her check linen apron.

"Whereabouts did ye hear they Whistlers, Rosaline?" she at length asked.

But there was no answer.

"On the Bare Plain, I take it," resumed the woman. "Were't a-nigh they mounds by the Shaft? Sounds echoes in they zigzag paths rarely. I've heard the wind a-whistling like anything there afore now."

A moan, telling of the sharpest mental agony, broke from Rosaline. Dame Bell heard it as she was coming in. In the midst of her pity, it angered her.

"Rosaline, I won't have this. There's reason in roasting eggs. We shall have your father here directly, and what will he say? I can tell you, he was bad enough when he went out. Come! just rouse yourself up."

"Father heard the Whistlers, and—they—bode—death!" shivered Rosaline, pausing between the words.

"They don't bode yours, I say," repeated Dame Bell, losing patience. "Do you suppose death comes to every person that hears the Whistlers?—or any ill-luck either?"

"No, no," assented Nancy Tomson, for Rosaline did not speak. "For one that falls into ill-luck after hearing they Whistlers, ten escapes. I've knowed a whole crowd o' they men hear the sounds, and nothing have come on't to any one on 'em."

"And that's true," said Mrs. Bell.

Rosaline could not be persuaded to try the pea-soup. It was impossible that she could swallow it, she said. Taking a candle, she went up to her room; to bed, as her mother supposed.

"And the best place for her," remarked Dame Bell. "To think of her getting a fright like this!"

But poor Rosaline did not go to bed, and did not undress. Her shoes off, she began to pace the few yards of space in her narrow chamber, to and fro, to and fro, from wall to wall, in an agony the like of which has rarely been felt on earth. She was living over again the night's meeting at the Bottomless Shaft and its dreadful ending: she

saw the white, upturned face, and heard the awful cry of despair of him who was falling into its pitiless depths, and was now lying there, dead: and it seemed to her that she, herself, must die of it.

The clock struck ten, and Nancy Tomson tore herself away from the warm and hospitable kitchen, after regaling herself upon the sup of pea-soup rejected by Rosaline. And Mrs. Bell sat on, knitting, and waiting for her husband.

When Rosaline, her hands lifted in frantic distress, tore away from the Bottomless Shaft that evening and the tragedy that had been enacted there, and went flying along the Bare Plain towards her home, Frank Raynor, recovering from the shock of horror which had well-nigh stunned all his faculties, went after her, and ran with her side by side. Two or three times he attempted to say a word to her, but she took no notice; she never answered; it was as if she did not hear. When they reached the narrow cross line that branched off to the cottages from the broad path, there she stopped, and turned her head to him.

"We part here. Part for ever."

"Are you going home?" he asked.

"Where else should I be going?" she rejoined, with a burst of anguish. "Where else have I to go?"

"I will see you safe to the door."

"No. No! Good-bye."

And, throwing out her hands at him, as if to ward him off, she would have sped onwards. But Frank Raynor could not part thus: he had something to say, and detained her. A few hasty words passed between them, and then she was at liberty to go. He stood to watch her until she drew near to her own door, when he turned back on his way across the plain.

In all his whole life Francis Raynor had never felt as he was feeling now. An awful weight had settled upon his soul. His friends had been wont to say that no calamity upon earth could bring down Frank's exuberant spirits, or change the lightness of his ways. But something had been found to do it now. Little less agitated was he than Rosaline; the sense of horror upon him was the same as hers.

He was now passing the fatal spot, the Bottomless Shaft; its surrounding batteries, or hillocks, shone out in the moonlight. Frank turned his eyes that way, and stood still to gaze. Of their own accord, and as if some fascination impelled him against his will, his steps moved thitherwards.

With a livid face, and noiseless feet, and a heart that ceased for the moment to beat, in its dread consciousness, he took the first narrow zigzag between two of the mounds. And—but what was it that met his gaze? As he came in view of the Shaft, he saw the figure of a man

standing on its brink. It was so utterly unexpected a sight, and so unlikely a one, that Frank stood still, scarcely believing it to be real. For one blissful moment he lost sight of impossibilities, and did indeed think it must be Josiah Bell.

Only for an instant. The truth returned to his mind in all its wretched nakedness, together with the recognition of the intruder. Mr. Blase Pellet. Mr. Blase was gingerly bending his body forward, but with the utmost caution, and looking down into the pit. As if he were listening for what might be to be heard there: just as the unhappy Rosaline had professed to listen but a few minutes before.

Frank had made no noise: and a gust of wind was just then sweeping the mounds, deadening all sound but its own. But, with that subtle instinct that warns us sometimes of a human presence, Blase Pellet turned sharply round to look, and saw him. Not a word passed. Frank drew silently back—though he knew the man had recognized him—and pursued his way over the Plain.

He guessed how it was. When he and Rosaline had been waiting amidst the mounds for Blase Pellet to pass, Blase had not passed. Blase must have seen them cross over to the spot in the moonlight; and, instead of continuing his route onwards, had stealthily crossed over after them, and concealed himself in one or other of the narrow zigzags. He must have remained there until now. How much had he seen? How much did he know? If anything had been capable of adding to the weight of perplexity and trouble that had fallen on Frank Raynor, it would be this. He groaned in spirit as he pursued his way homeward.

"How late you are, Frank!"

The words, spoken by Edina, met him as he entered. Hearing him come in, she had opened the door of the sitting-room. In the bewildering confusion of his mind, the perplexity as to the future, the sudden shock of the one moment's calamity, which might change the whole current of his future life, Frank Raynor had lost all recollection of the engagement for the evening. The appearance of Edina recalled it to him.

She was in evening dress: though very sober dress. A plain grey silk, its low body and short sleeves trimmed with a little white lace; a gold chain and locket on her neck; and bracelets of not much value.

"Are—are you going, Edina?"

"*Going!*" replied Edina. "Of course I am going. You are going also, are you not?"

Frank pushed his hair off his brow. The gay scene at the Mount, and the dreadful scene in which he had just been an actor, struck upon him as being frightfully incongruous. Edina was gazing at him: she detected some curious change in his manner, and she saw that he was looking very pale.

"Is anything the matter, Frank? Are you not well?"

"Oh, I am quite well."

"Surely that poor woman is not dead?"

"What woman?" asked Frank, his wits still wool-gathering. Dr. Raynor, leaving his chair by the parlour fire, had also come to the door to look on.

"Have you been to see more than one?" said Edina. "I meant Molly Janes."

"Oh—ay—yes," returned Frank, passing his hand over his bewildered brow. "She'll be all right in a few days. There's no very serious damage."

"What has made you so long, then?" questioned the Doctor.

"I—did not know it was late," was the only excuse poor Frank could call up, as he turned from the fixed gaze of Edina. And in point of fact he did not, even yet, know whether it was late or early.

"Pray make haste, Frank," said Edina. "You can dress quickly when you like. I did not wish, you know, to be so late as this."

He turned to the staircase to seek his room. There was no help for it: he must go to this revelry. Edina could not go alone: and, indeed, he had no plea to offer for declining to accompany her. Not until he was taking his coat off did he remember the blow on his shoulder. When the mind is at rest, the body feels its ailments: most certainly Frank Raynor, in his mind's grievous trouble, had neither felt the pain left by the blow, nor recollected it.

Yet it was a pretty severe stroke, and the shoulder on which it fell was stiff and aching. Frank, his coat off, was passing his hand tenderly over the place, perhaps to ascertain the extent of damage, when the door was tapped at and then opened by Edina.

"Here's a flower for your button-hole, Frank."

It was a very beautiful hot-house flower, looking like white wax. Dr. Raynor had brought it from the patient's house where he had been in the afternoon, and Edina had kept it until the last moment as a surprise to Frank. He took it quite mechanically; thanking her, it is true, but very tamely, his thoughts evidently far away. Edina could but note the change: what had become of Frank's careless light-heartedness?

"Is anything amiss with your shoulder?"

"It has got a bit of a bruise, I think," he lightly answered, beginning to splash away in his basin.

She shut the door, and Frank went on dressing, always mechanically. How many nights, and days, and weeks, and years, would it be before he could get out of his mind the horror of the recently-passed scene!

"I wish to heaven that she-demon, Molly Janes, had been *there!*" he cried, stamping his foot on the floor in a sudden access of grief and

passion. "But for her vagaries, I should not have been called out this evening, and the terrible calamity could not have happened!"

Edina was ready when he went down, well cloaked and shawled; her silk gown pinned up carefully, a warm hood upon her smooth brown hair. The Doctor did not keep a close carriage; no such thing as a fly was to be had at Trennach; and so they had to walk. Mrs. St. Clare had graciously intimated that she would send her carriage for Miss Raynor if the night turned out to be a bad one. But the night was fine and bright.

"You will be *sure* not to sit up for us, papa," said Edina, while Frank was putting on his overcoat. "It is quite uncertain what time we shall come home."

"No, no, child; I shall not sit up."

When they came to the end of the village, Frank turned off on the road way, at the back of the parsonage, Edina on his arm. She asked him why he did so: over the Bare Plain was the nearest way.

"But this is less dreary," was his answer. "We shall soon be there."

"Nay, I think the Bare Plain is far less dreary than the road; especially on such a night as this," said Edina. "Here we are overshadowed by trees: there we get the full sheen of the moonlight."

He said no more; only kept on his way. It did not matter: it would make but about three minutes' difference. Edina stepped out cheerfully: she never made a fuss over trifles. By-and-by, she began to wonder at his silence. It was very unusual.

"Have you the headache, Frank?"

"No. Yes. Just a little."

Edina said nothing to the contradictory answer. Something unusual had decidedly occurred to Frank. "How did you bruise your shoulder?" she presently asked.

"Oh—gave it a knock," he said, after the slightest possible pause. "My shoulder's all right, Edina: don't talk of it. A little more right than that confounded Molly Janes' bruises are."

And with the sharp words, sounding so strange from Frank's good-natured lips, Edina caught up the notion that the grievance was in some way connected with Molly Janes, perhaps the damaged shoulder also. Possibly she had turned obstreperous under the young doctor's hands, and had shown fight to him as well as to her husband.

The Mount burst upon them in a blaze of light. Plants, festoons, music, brilliancy! As they were going into the chief reception-room, out-of-door wrappings removed, Edina missed that beautiful white wax flower: Frank's coat was unadorned.

"Frank! What have you done with your flower?"

His eyes wandered to the flowers decorating the rooms, and then down to his button-hole, all in an absent sort of way that surprised Miss Raynor.

"I fear I must have forgotten to put it in, Edina. I wish you had worn it yourself: it would have been more appropriate. How well it would have looked in your hair!"

"Fancy me with a flower in my hair!" laughed Edina. "But, Frank, I think Molly Janes has scared some of your wits away."

Their greeting to Mrs. St. Clare over, Frank found a seat for Edina, and stood back himself in a corner, behind a remote door. Oh, how terribly did this scene of worldly excitement contrast with the one enacted so short a while ago! He was living it, perforce, over again, going through, bit by bit, its short-lived action, that had been all over in one or two fatal moments: this, before him, seemed but a dream. The gaily-robed women sweeping past him with light laughter; the gleam of jewels; the pomp and pageantry: it all seemed but the shifting scenes in an imaginary panorama. Frank could have groaned aloud at the bitter mockery: life here; gay, heedless, joyous life: and there, DEATH; death violent and sudden. Never before, throughout his days, had the solemn responsibilities of this world and of the next pressed upon him in all their dread, stern reality.

"Oh, Mr. Raynor! I thought you were not coming! Have you been here long?"

The emotional words, spoken in surprise, came from a fair girl in a cloud of white—Daisy St. Clare. Frank's hand went forward to meet the one held out to him: but never a smile crossed his face.

"How long have you been here, Mr. Raynor?"

"How long? I am not sure. Half an hour, I think."

"Have you been dancing?"

"Oh, no. I have been standing here."

"On purpose to hide yourself? I should not have seen you but that I am looking in all corners for Lydia's card, which she has lost."

He did not answer: his head was throbbing, his heart beating. Daisy thought him very silent.

"I have had my dance with Sir Paul Trellasis," said Daisy, toying with her own card, a hot blush on her face, and her eyes cast down.

At any other moment Frank would have read the signs fast enough, and taken the hint: she was ready to dance with *him*. But he never asked her: he did not take the gilded leaves and pencil into his own hands and write down his name as many times as he pleased. He simply stood still, gazing out with vacant eyes and a sad look on his face. Daisy at length glanced up at him.

"Are you ill?" she inquired.

"No; only tired."

"Too tired to dance?" she ventured to ask, after a pause, her pulses quickening a little as she put the suggestive question.

"Yes. I cannot dance to-night, Miss Margaret."

"Oh, but why?"

His breath was coming a little quickly with emotion. Not caused by Daisy, and her words, and her hope of dancing; but by that dreadful *recollection*. Stilling his tone to calmness, he spoke.

"Pray forgive me, Miss Margaret, I really cannot dance to-night."

And the cold demeanour, the discouraging words, threw a chill upon her heart. What had she done to him, that he should change like this? With a bearing that sought to be proud, but a quivering lip, Margaret turned away.

He caught her eye as she was doing so; caught the expression of her face, and read its bitter disappointment. The next moment, he was bending over her, pressing her hand within his.

"Forgive me, Daisy," he whispered, in a tone of pleading tenderness. "No; indeed it is not caprice: I—I cannot dance to-night. Go you and dance to your heart's content, and let me hide myself here until Miss Raynor shall be ready to leave. The kindest thing you can do is to take no further notice of me."

He released her hand as he spoke, and stood back again by the wall in the dark corner. Margaret turned away with a shivering sigh. Her delight in the evening was gone.

"And he never wished me any good wishes! It might just as well not have been my birthday."

CHAPTER V.

MISSING.

THERE was commotion next morning at Trennach, especially about the region of the Bare Plain, and those cottages on it that were called Bleak Row. Josiah Bell had disappeared. Mrs. Bell had sat up half the night waiting for him to come home; then, concluding that he had taken too much to be able to get there, and had either stayed at the Golden Shaft, or found refuge with Andrew Float, she went to bed. Upon making inquiries this morning, this proved not to be the case. Nothing seemed to be known of Josiah Bell. His comrades professed ignorance of his movements: the Golden Shaft had not got him; neither had Andrew Float.

Mrs. Bell rose betimes. When people are in a state of exasperation, they forget bodily weakness: and that word exactly expresses Dame Bell's state of mind. It was of course necessary she should be up, to give Bell a proper trimming when he should make his appearance at home. While she was dressing, she saw Nancy Tomson's husband outside, apparently starting for Trennach. Throwing a warm shawl over her petticoats, she opened the casement window.

"I say, Tomson!" she called out. And the man looked up, his face

leaden-colour and his eyes red. "What was the reason my husband did not come home?"

Tomson took a few minutes to digest the question. Apparently his recollection on the point did not readily serve him.

"I dun know," said he. "Didn't Bell come home?"

"No, he didn't."

"Bain't he come yet?"

"No, he is not. And I think it was a very unfriendly thing of the rest of you not to bring him. You had to come yourselves. Did you leave him at the Golden Shaft?"

"Bell warn't at the Golden Shaft," called back Tomson.

"Now don't you tell me any of your untruths, Ben Tomson," returned Mrs. Bell. "Not at the Golden Shaft! Where else was he?"

"I'll take my blessed davy Bell were not at the Golden Shaft last evening!" said the man. "He cleared out on't at dusk."

"But he went back to it later."

"He never did—as I saw," persisted Tomson; who was an obstinate man in maintaining his own opinion.

"Was Andrew Float there?" asked Mrs. Bell.

"Let's see. Andrew Float? Yes, Float were there."

"Then I know Bell was there too. And don't you talk any more nonsense about it, Ben Tomson. Bell was too bad to get home himself, and none of you chose to help him; perhaps you were too bad yourselves to do it. And there he has stayed till now; either at the Golden Shaft, or else with Float the miner: and you'd very much oblige me, Tomson, if you'd hunt him up."

She shut the casement, watched Tomson start on his way to Trennach, and, presently, went down to breakfast. Rosaline was getting it ready as usual—there was no one else to do it—looking more dead than alive.

"We'll wait a bit, Rose, to see whether your father comes. Don't put the tea in yet."

Rose was kneeling before the fire at the moment. She turned short round at the words, with a kind of wild look in her eyes, and seemed to be about to say something; but checked herself.

Half an hour passed: Dame Bell getting more angry each minute, and rehearsing sharper greetings for Bell in her mind. At last they sat down to breakfast. Rose could not eat; she seemed very ill: but her mother, quite taken up with the ill-doings of the truant, did not observe it as she would otherwise have done. Breakfast was at an end, although Mrs. Bell lingered over it, when Tomson returned; and with him appeared the tall ungainly form of Float the miner.

"Well?" cried Mrs. Bell, rising briskly from her chair in expectation, as Tomson raised the latch of the door.

"Well, 'tis as I said," said Tomson. "Bell didn't come back to the Golden Shaft last night after he cleared out on't just afore dark. He ain't nowheres about as we can see."

Mrs. Bell looked from one to the other: at Tomson with his rather sullen countenance, at Float's good-natured one. She might have thought the men were deceiving her, but that she could not see what motive they would have for doing it. Unless, indeed, Bell was lying somewhere in Trennach, so bad after his bout that they did not like to tell her.

"Where is he, then, I should like to know?" she retorted, in answer to Tomson.

"Can't tell," said Tomson. "None o' they men has seen him."

"Now this won't do," cried Dame Bell. "You must know where he is. Do you suppose he's *lost?* Don't you stand simpering there on one leg, Andrew Float, but just tell me where he is hiding himself."

"I'd tell ye if I knew, ma'am," said Andrew, in his meek and simple way. "I'd like to know where he is myself."

"But he was at the Golden Shaft last night: he *must* have been," insisted the dame, unable to divest herself of the belief. "What became of him when the place shut up? What state was he in?"

"No, ma'am, he was not there," said Andrew, with mild deprecation, for he never liked to contradict.

"Stuff!" said Mrs. Bell. "There was nowhere else for him to go to. What did you do with him, Andrew Float?"

"I done nothing with him," rejoined Andrew. "He kep' I and they other fellows a-waiting all the evening for him at the Golden Shaft; but he didn't come back to't."

"I know he was stuck at the Golden Shaft pretty nigh all day yesterday," retorted Mrs. Bell, explosively.

"He were," acknowledged Andrew. "He come back after his dinner, and stayed there along 'o the rest of us. Just as they were a-lighting up, Bell, he gets off the settle and puts on his hat; when we asked where he was going, he said to do a errand. Upon that, one o' they fellows—Janes, I think it were—wanted to know what errand; but Bell wouldn't answer him. He'd be back by-and-by, he said; and went out."

"And he did *not* go back?" reiterated Dame Bell.

"No, ma'am, he didn't. Though we stayed a bit later than usual on the strength of expecting him."

"It's very strange," said she. "He came home here about seven o'clock, or between that and half-past—I can't be sure as to the exact time. I thought he had come for good; he was three-parts tipsy then, and I advised him to sit down and make himself comfortable. Not a bit on't. After standing a minute or so, swirling his stick about, and asking where Rosaline was, and this and the other, he suddenly pushes

his hat lower down on his head, and out he goes in a passion—as I could tell by his banging of the door. Of course he was going back to the Golden Shaft! There can't be a doubt of it."

"He never did come, then," said Float.

"I say," cried Tomson at this juncture, "what's the matter of Rosaline?"

During the above conversation, Rosaline had stood at the dresser, wiping the plates one by one, and keeping her back to the company, so that they did not see her face. But it chanced that Tomson went to the fire to light his pipe, just as Rosaline's work at the shelves came to an end. As she crossed the kitchen to the staircase, Tomson met her and had full view of her. The man stared after her in surprise: even when she had disappeared up the stairs and shut the door behind her, he still stood staring; for he had never seen in all his life a face to equal it for livid terror. It was then that he put his question to Mrs. Bell.

"Didn't your wife tell you what it was that frighted her, Ben Tomson?"

"My wife have said ne'er a word to me since yesterday, dinner time," confessed Tomson. "Her temper be up. Rosaline do look bad, though!"

"She heard the Seven Whistlers last night," explained Mrs. Bell. "It did fright her a'most to death."

"What!—they Whistlers here again last night?" cried Tomson, his eyes opening with consternation and his pipe dropping from his mouth.

Mrs. Bell nodded. "Your wife and me were sitting here, waiting for Rosaline to come in, and wondering why Granny Sandon kept her so late. I opened the door to see if I could see her coming across the Plain—or Bell, either, for the matter o' that—and there she was, crouched again' the wall outside, dropped down there with terror. We got her indoors, me and Nancy Tomson; and for some time could make nothing of her; she was too frighted to speak. At last she told us what it was:—she had heard the Seven Whistlers as she was coming over the Plain."

But now this statement of Dame Bell's unconsciously deviated from the strict line of truth—as the reader may see by referring. Rosaline had not "told" them that she heard the Seven Whistlers on the Plain. When her mother suddenly accused her of having heard the Whistlers, and was backed in the suggestion by Nancy Tomson, poor Rosaline nodded an affirmative in sheer despair. She could not avow what it was that had frightened her; and the Seven Whistlers—which she had certainly *not* heard—did for a plea of excuse as well as anything else. The two women of course adopted the belief religiously, and had no objection to talk of it.

"They Whistlers again!" resumed Tomson, in dismay. "Ross,

he's raging just like a rumpigeous bear this morning, threatening us o' the law, and what not; but he *can't* expect us to go down and risk our lives while they boding Whistlers be hanging about."

"There, never mind they Whistlers," broke in Mrs. Bell, who sometimes fell into the native grammar. "Where's Bell got to? that's what I want to know."

Of course Tomson could not say where Bell had got to. Neither could Float. The latter made the most sensible suggestion that the circumstances admitted of—namely, that they should go and search for him. Mrs. Bell urged them to do so at once and to make haste about it. Bell would be found in Trennach fast enough, she said. If he had not taken refuge in Float the miner's house, he had in somebody else's, and he was staying there till he got sober.

On this day, Wednesday, Trennach was again taking holiday, and laying the blame of it on the Seven Whistlers. But this state of things could not last. The men knew that; and they had now promised the overseer, Ross, whose rage was excessive, that the morrow should see them at work. One wise old miner avowed an opinion—that three days would be enough to "break the spell o' they Whistlers, and avert consekenses."

So the village street was filled with idle men; who really, apart from smoking and drinking, had nothing to do with themselves. They lounged about as on the other days, hands in pockets, shoulders slouching. It was a little early yet for the Golden Shaft when Andrew Float and Tomson arrived amidst them with the account that Josiah Bell had not been seen since the previous evening or been home all night, and that his wife (or as Tomson phrased it in the familiar local vernacular, his woman) couldn't think where he had got to, and had put a rod in pickle. The men with one accord agreed to look after him in a body: and they set about it heartily, for it was something to do.

But Josiah Bell could not be found. The miners' dwellings were searched for him, perhaps without one single exception, but he had not taken refuge in any of them. Since quitting the Golden Shaft the previous evening at dusk, as testified to by the men who were there, only two persons, apart from his wife, could remember to have seen him: Blase Pellet, and the Rector of Trennach, the Reverend Thomas Pine. Mr. Pellet, standing at his shop-door for recreation at the twilight hour, saw Bell pass down the street, and noticed that he was tolerably far gone in liquor. The clergyman had seen and spoken with Bell a very few minutes later.

Chancing to meet the men on their search this morning, Mr. Pine learnt that Josiah Bell was missing. The clergyman always made himself quite at home with the men, whether they belonged to his flock or were Wesleyans, striving by friendly persuasion to lead them away from evil. And he did much good no doubt; but this last

affair of the Whistlers and the idleness in consequence had been too strong for him. Latterly he had been in very poor health; the result of many years' hard work, and no holiday. Dr. Raynor had now told him that an entire rest of some months had become essential; if he did not take it he would break down. He was a tall, thin, middle-aged man with a worn face. Particularly worn, it looked, as he stood talking with the group of miners this morning.

"I saw Bell last evening myself," observed Mr. Pine. "And I was very sorry to see him as I did, for he could hardly walk straight. I was coming off the Plain and met him at its entrance. He had halted, and was looking about all ways, in doubt—as it struck me—whether he should go on home, or go back whence he had come: which I suppose was that favourite resort of yours, my men, the Golden Shaft. 'You had better go straight home, Bell,' I said to him. 'I'm going that way, sir,' he answered. And he did go that way: for I stood and watched him well into the Plain."

"Well, we can't find him nohow, sir," observed Andrew Float. "What time might that ha' been, sir, please?"

"Time? Somewhat past seven. I should think it likely that Bell lay down somewhere to sleep the liquor off," added the clergyman, as he prepared to continue his way. "It is not often Bell exceeds as he exceeded yesterday, and therefore it would take more effect upon him." The Bells, it may as well be said, were church people.

Frank Raynor was out on his round this morning, as usual, and paid a visit to Molly Janes—whom he found going on satisfactorily. In passing Mrs. Bell's window, he saw Rosaline: hesitated, and then lifted the latch and went in. He stayed there a minute or two talking with her alone, the mother being upstairs; and left her with the one word emphatically repeated, "Remember."

When Tomson went home to his midday meal, he informed Mrs. Bell that there were no tidings of her husband. She received the information with incredulity. Much they had searched! she said, as Tomson disappeared: they had just sat themselves down again at the Golden Shaft; that was what they had done. Which accusation was this time a libel. She resolved to go and look after him herself when she had eaten her bit of dinner. As to Rosaline, she did not know what to make of her. The girl looked frightfully ill, did not speak, and every now and then was seized with a fit of trembling.

"Such nonsense, child, to let the Whistlers frighten you into this state!" cried Mrs. Bell, tartly.

Dressing herself after dinner, she started for Trennach, charging Rosaline to have the tea ready by the time she got home.

"I shall be sure to bring your father back with me; I'm not going to stand any nonsense: and you might make a nice bit of buttered toast; it's what he's fond of."

Stepping briskly across the Plain, went Mrs. Bell. Nothing imparts activity of motion like a little access of temper, and she was boiling over with indignation at her husband. The illness from which she was suffering did not deprive her of exertion: and in truth it was not a serious illness yet, though it might become so. Symptoms of a slow, inward complaint were manifesting themselves, and Dr. Raynor was doing his best to subdue them. In his private judgment he feared for the result; but Dame Bell did not suspect that.

Dr. Raynor and his nephew stood in the surgery after their midday dinner, the Doctor with his back to the fire, Frank handing some prepared medicines for delivery to the boy, who waited for them. As the latter went out with his basket, Blase Pellet ran over the road and came in, apron on, and minus his hat.

"Could you oblige us with a small portion of one or two drugs, sir?" he asked of Dr. Raynor: mentioning the names of those required. "We are quite out of them, and our traveller won't be calling before next week. Mr. Float's respects to you, sir, and he'll be much obliged if you can do it."

"I daresay we can," replied Dr. Raynor. "Just see, Frank, will you?"

As Frank was looking out the drugs, Mr. Pine came in. He was rather fond of running in for a chat with the Doctor and Frank at leisure moments. Frank was an especial favourite of his, with his unaffected good heart and his geniality of nature.

"A fine state of things, is it not!" cried the clergyman, with a general nod round, alluding to the idlers in the streets. "Three days of it, we have had now."

"They will be at work to-morrow, I hear," said the Doctor. "Has Bell turned up yet?"

"No. The men have just told me they don't know where to look for him. They have searched everywhere. It seems strange where he can have got to?"

Blase Pellet, standing before the table, waiting for the drugs, caught Frank's eye as the last words were spoken. A meaning gaze shot out from Pellet, and Frank Raynor's face fell as he met it. It plainly said, "*You* know where he is:" or it seemed to do so to Frank's guilty conscience.

"The fellow must have seen all!" thought Frank. "What on earth will come of it?"

Some one pushed back the half-open door, and stepped in with a bustling gait and rather sharp tongue. Dame Bell: in her Sunday Paisley shawl, and green strings to her bonnet.

"If you please, Dr. Raynor—I beg pardon, gentlefolks"—catching sight of the clergyman standing there—"if you please, Doctor, could you just give me some little thing to quiet Rosaline's nerves. She

heard the Seven Whistlers last night, and they've frighted her pretty nigh out of her senses."

"Heard the Seven Whistlers!" repeated the clergyman, a hearty smile crossing his face.

"She did, sir. And pretty near died of it. I'd never have thought Rosaline could be so foolish. But there; it *is* so; and to-day she's just like one dazed. Not an atom of colour in her face; cowed down so as hardly to be able to put one foot afore the other; and every other minute gets a fit of the shivers."

To hear this astounding account of the hitherto gay, light-hearted, and self-contained Rosaline Bell, surprised the surgery not a little. Dr. Raynor naturally asked for further particulars; and Dame Bell plunged into the history of the previous night, and went through with it.

"Yes, gentlefolks, those were her very words—almost all we could get out of her: 'Father heard them and they boded death.' I ——"

"But you should have tried to reason her out of such nonsense," interrupted Dr. Raynor.

"*Me* have tried!" retorted Dame Bell, taking up the words. "Why sir, it is what I did do. Me and Nancy Tomson both tried our best; but all she answered was just what I now tell ye: 'Father heard the Whistlers, and they boded death.'"

Mr. Blase Pellet, standing with the small packets of drugs in his hand, ready to go, but apparently unable to tear himself away from the narrative, glanced up at Frank with the last words, and again momentarily met his eye. A slight shiver passed through Frank—caught perhaps from hearing of Rosaline's shivers—and he buried his face in a deep drawer, where it could not be seen; as if in search of something missing.

"Well, it is a pity Rosaline should suffer herself to be alarmed at anything of the sort," observed Dr. Raynor; "but I will send her a composing draught. Are you going home now, Mrs. Bell?"

"As soon as I can find my husband, sir. I've come in to look for him. Tomson wanted to persuade me that he and Float and a lot more of them had been hunting after him all the morning; but I know better. Bell has got inside one of their houses, and there he's sleeping the fumes of drink off."

"The men have just told me they can't find him," said the clergyman. "I know they have been searching."

"There's an old saying, sir, 'If you want a thing done, do it yourself.' Fine searching, I've no doubt it has been!—the best part of it inside the Golden Shaft. I'm going to look him up myself—and if you please, Dr. Raynor, I'll make bold to call in, as I go back, for the physic for Rosaline."

Unbelieving Mrs. Bell departed. Blase Pellet followed her. Dr.

Raynor told Frank what to make up for Rosaline, and then he himself went out with Mr. Pine.

A few minutes afterwards, Edina softly opened the surgery door, and glanced in. She generally came cautiously, not knowing whether patients might be in it or not. But there was only Frank. And Frank had his arms on the desk, and his head buried on them. The attitude certainly told of despondency, and Edina stood in astonishment: it was so unlike the gay-hearted young man.

"Why, Frank! What is the matter?"

He pulled himself up with a start, and stared, bewildered, at Edina: as if his thoughts had been far away, and he could not all in a moment bring them back again. Edina saw the trouble in his unguarded face, but he smoothed it away instantly.

"You have not seemed at all yourself since last night, Frank," said she in a low tone, as she advanced further into the room. "Something or other has happened, I am sure. Is it anything that I can set right?—or help you in?"

"Now, Edina, don't run away with fancies," rejoined he, as gaily as though he had not a care in the world. "There's nothing at all the matter with me. I suppose I had dropped asleep over the physic. One does not stay out raking till three o'clock in the morning every day, you know."

"You cannot deceive me, Frank," rejoined Edina, her true, thoughtful eyes fixed earnestly upon him. "I—I cannot help fancying that it is in some way connected with Rosaline Bell," she added, lowering her voice. "I hope you are not getting into any entanglement: falling in love with her; or anything of that kind?"

"Not a bit of it," readily answered Frank.

"Well, Frank, if I can do anything to aid you in any way, you have only to ask me; you know that," concluded Edina, perceiving he was not inclined to speak. "Always remember this much, Frank: that in any trouble or perplexity, the best course is, to look it straight in the face, freely and fully. It takes away half its sting."

CHAPTER VI.

EDINA'S ROMANCE.

In the days gone by there were three of the Brothers Raynor: Francis, Henry, and Hugh. Francis entered the army; Henry the church; and Hugh the medical profession. With the two former we have at present nothing to do. Hugh Raynor passed his examinations satisfactorily, and took all his degrees—thus becoming Dr. Raynor. Chance and fortune favoured him. He was at once taken by the hand by an old

doctor who had an excellent practice in May Fair, and became his assistant and his frequent companion. The old doctor had one only child, a daughter, who was just as much taken with Hugh (and he with her) as was her father. They were married; and on the death of the old doctor shortly afterwards, Dr. Raynor succeeded to a good deal of the practice. He was quite a young man still, thoroughly well intentioned, but not so prudent as he might have been. He and his wife lived rather extravagantly, and the Doctor sometimes found himself short of ready money. They resided in the same house that had been the old doctor's; and they, heedlessly, and perhaps unconsciously, made the mistake of beginning where he had left off: that is, they continued their housekeeping on the same scale as his; maintained the same expenses, horses, carriages, and entertainments. The result was, that Dr. Raynor in the course of four or five years found himself considerably involved. In an evil moment, thinking to make money by which to redeem his fortunes, he embarked his name (and as much money as he could scrape together) in one of the bubble schemes of the day. A scheme which (according to its prospectus, and its promoters' stout assertions, and the credulous Doctor's own belief) was safe and sure to realize an immense fortune in no time.

Instead of that, it realized poverty and ruin. The scheme failed—the usual result—and Dr. Raynor found himself responsible for more money than he would ever make in this world. Misfortunes, it has been too often said, do not come alone: Dr. Raynor proved an example of it. Just before the bubble burst, he lost his wife: and the only one element of comfort that crept to him in the midst of his bitter grief for her, was to know that she died before the other blow fell.

A frightful blow it was, tending well-nigh to utterly prostrate Dr. Raynor. The angry creditors of the ruthless company took all from him: even to the gold watch upon his person. They sold up his furniture, his books, his carriages and horses, and everything; and they told him he might thank their leniency that they did not put him in prison until he could pay up the scores of thousands of pounds they made out he was responsible for. The fact was, the promoters of the company, and those of its directors who possessed funds, had gone over to the Continent; and there remained only the poor Doctor, innocent and honourable, to pitch upon.

Turned out of house and home, his name in the public papers, his prospects gone, Dr. Raynor felt as though he should be glad to die. He did not even attempt to retain his practice; his only care was to get away from the scene of his prosperity and hide his humiliated head for ever. His only little child, Edina, was five years old; and for her sake he must try and get a roof over his head and a bit of bread to eat. So he looked out for employment after awhile, as far away from

London and in as obscure a corner as might be, and obtained it amidst the collieries in North Warwickshire, as assistant to a general practitioner. After remaining there for some years, he heard of an opening at Trennach. The surgeon of the place, who was an old man and wanted to retire, chanced to know Dr. Raynor, and offered him the succession upon very easy terms. It was accepted, and the Doctor removed to Trennach. The returns from the practice were very small at first, scarcely enabling him to get along, for it lay almost entirely among the poor: but subsequently Dr. Raynor dropped into a better class of practice as well, through the death of another surgeon some two or three miles from Trennach. And here he had remained: a sad and silent man ever, since the misfortunes of his early days, living as retired a life as might be. His only care, his constant companion, had been his beloved child, Edina. He had trained her to be all that a woman should be: true, earnest, thoughtful, good. Not many women in this world were like Edina Raynor.

The only sister of the three brothers Raynor had married a London banker, Timothy Atkinson, the junior partner in the house of Atkinson and Atkinson. When Edina was two-and-twenty years of age, she went on a visit to her aunt in London. Mr. and Mrs. Timothy Atkinson had no children, and in these later years she had become an invalid. She was also eccentric and capricious; and, for the first few days after her arrival, Edina thought she should not enjoy her visit at all. Timothy Atkinson was a sociable little man, but he spent all his time in the business downstairs—for they lived at the banking-house.

But soon a change came. George Atkinson, the son of the elder partner, found out Edina; and, perhaps pitying her loneliness, or out of courtesy, he constituted himself her cavalier. He was nine or ten years older than Edina: a rather silent young man of middle height and grave courtesy, with a pleasant voice and thoughtful face. He was not strong, and there had been some talk of his having been ordered to travel for his health; but the death of his mother had intervened. But, though a silent man to the world in general, he was eloquent to Edina. At least, she found him so. As though they had been the real cousins that Mrs. Atkinson sometimes called them, he was allowed to take her everywhere. To the theatres, the opera, the gardens: to all the shows and sights of London, Edina was entrusted to the care of George Atkinson. Sometimes Mrs. Atkinson was with them; more often she was not.

And better care he could not have taken of her had she been his cousin or sister, or shown himself more solicitous for her comfort. Honourable in principle, instinctively kind, upright in character, noble in sentiment, there was in George Atkinson a chivalrous devotion to women, that could but betray itself in manner and tell upon those on

whom it was exercised. It told upon Edina. Before one half of their few weeks' companionship together had passed, she had learnt to love George Atkinson with a lasting love.

Many a half hour did he spend talking to her in low, gentle accents of his recently dead mother. His love, his reverence, his still lively grief for her loss, was expressed in the truest and most tender terms. This alone would have taken Edina's heart by storm. She believed there lived not another man in the world who was so true a gentleman, so estimable and admirable in all respects as George Atkinson. Indeed he was rather much so, as young men go; and neither Edina nor any other girl need feel aught but pride at being chosen by him.

Poor Edina! It was the one great mistake of her life. While George Atkinson had no ulterior thought of her, hope was whispering to her heart the possibility that they might pass their future lives together. And oh, what an Eden it would have been for Edina! She loved him with all the intensity of a pure and fresh young heart: while he, though no doubt liking her very much indeed; nay, perhaps even loving her a little bit just in one corner of his waistcoat; had no intentions beyond the present hour. He knew he was not strong; and he meant to see what travelling, far and wide, would do to make him so. Consequently he did not give a thought to marriage.

It was only the last day of her stay, the one previous to her departure for home, that the revelation came to Edina, and her eyes were opened all too abruptly. They were together in the drawing-room in the half-hour before dinner. Mr. Timothy Atkinson had not come up from the counting-house, his wife was yet in her chamber. It was a lovely day in late spring. Edina stood by one of the open windows, which had been made into a sort of small fernery. The western sunlight was playing upon the leaves, and touching her own smooth hair and her fair young face.

"It is very beautiful—but I think very delicate," observed Edina, in regard to a new specimen of fern just planted, which they were both looking at. "Do you think it will live?"

George Atkinson passed his fingers underneath the small leaf, and somehow they met Edina's, which were also there. He did not seem to notice the momentary contact; *her* pulses thrilled at it.

"Oh yes, Edina, it will live and flourish," he answered. "In six months' time you will see what it will be."

"*You* may," she said smiling. "It will be a great many more months than six, I suppose, before I am here again. Perhaps it may be years."

"Indeed, Edina, I am not likely to be here long. But for my mother's death and my father's breaking health, I should have been gone before this."

"But you will return?" said Edina.

"Some time I may. I cannot answer for it."

"What do you mean, George?"

"Not very much," he answered, with a grave and kindly smile in his dark grey eyes. "An idea crosses my mind now and then, that when once I get into those genial lands, where the skies are blue and the winds temperate, I shall be in no hurry to quit them. Of course I don't say that I shall remain there for life; but—it might happen."

A pang, sharp as a two-edged sword, struck Edina. "What, and abandon your country for ever, and—and home ties?"

"As to home ties, Edina, there's only my father now. Of course my future movements will be regulated with reference to him as long as he is with us. But—I fear—that may not be very much longer. As you know."

She made a slight movement of assent; and bent her head lower over the ferns.

"And I shall not be likely to make home ties for myself," went on Mr. George Atkinson, unconscious of the anguish he was inflicting. "I shall never marry."

"Why?" breathed Edina.

"I scarcely know why," he replied after a pause, as if he were searching for the reason. "I have never entertained the idea. I fancy I shall like a life of travel best. And so—when once we part, Edina—and that must be to-morrow you say, though I think you might have remained longer—it is hard to say when we shall meet again. If we ever do."

"Halloa, who's here? Oh it is you, George; and Edina! Where's your aunt? Dinner must be nearly ready."

The interruption to the silence came from brisk little Timothy Atkinson, who bounded into the room with quick steps and his shining bald head.

As Edina turned at his entrance George Atkinson caught the expression of her face: the strange sadness in its eyes, its hue of pallor. She looked like one who has received a shock. All at once a revelation broke upon him, as if from subtle instinct. For an instant he stood motionless, one hand pushing back his brown hair; hair that was very much the same shade as Edina's.

"It may be better so," he said in a whisper, meeting her yearning eyes with his earnest gaze. "At any rate I have thought so. Better for myself, better for all."

The tall, large, portly frame of Mrs. Timothy Atkinson, clothed with rich crimson satin, rolled into the room, and the conversation was at an end. And with it, as Edina knew, her life's romance.

"God bless you, Edina," George Atkinson said to her the next day, as he attended her to the station with Mr. Timothy, and clasped her hand at parting. "When I return to England in years to come—if ever

I do return—I shall find you a blooming matron, with a husband and a flock of children about you. Farewell."

As she sat back in the swiftly-speeding railway carriage, not striving, in these the early moments of anguished awaking, to do battle with her breaking heart, she knew that the blow would last her for all time. Her father thought her changed when she arrived, and also as the days went on. She was more quiet, more subdued: sad, even, at times. He little knew the struggle that was going on within her, or the incessant strivings to subdue the recollection of the past, and from henceforth to make duty her guide. She got over it in time: but it exercised an influence upon her still.

And that had been Edina Raynor's romance in life, and its ending. And now we go on with the story.

When another day had dawned over Trennach, and still the absent man, Josiah Bell, did not return, his wife's exasperation gave place to real anxiety. She could not even guess what had become of him, or where he could be. Suspicion was unable to make itself a loop-hole in any particular quarter; not a shadow of ground did there appear for it. Had the man taken refuge in any of the miners' houses, as she had supposed, there he would still be; but there he was not. Had he stretched himself somewhere on the Bare Plain to sleep off the stupidity arising from the liquor, as suggested by Mr. Pine, there he would have been found. No: the miners' dwellings and the Plain were alike guiltless of harbouring him; and Mrs. Bell was puzzled nearly out of her wits.

It cannot be said that as yet fear assailed her of any fatal accident, or issue. The mystery of where her husband could be was a great one, at present utterly unaccountable; but she never supposed but that it would be solved by his re-appearance sooner or later. And she had given Mr. Blase Pellet a sharp set-down upon his hinting that there might exist some question of it.

It had occurred the previous day. After her unsuccessful search in person at the miners' dwellings, she had turned homewards, and was walking down the street of Trennach, in a state of much inward wonder, when she saw Float the druggist outside his door, and crossed over to enlarge upon the matter to him; Mr. Blase Pellet of course gliding forward from behind the counter to listen to the conference. "Bell's safe to turn up soon," remarked the druggist, who was a peaceful man. "Turn up! of course he'll turn up," replied the dame: "and he will get such a dressing from me, when he does, that I don't think he'll be for hiding himself again o' one while." Upon that, Pellet spoke: "Suppose he never does turn up?—suppose he's dead—or something of that kind?" The suggestion angered Mrs. Bell. "Be you a heathen, Blase Pellet, to invent such a thought as that?" she demanded in wrath. "What do you suppose Bell's likely to die from?—and where?"

And, leaving Mr. Pellet to repent of his rashness, the dame marched over to Dr. Raynor's to get the composing draught promised for Rosaline. And then home she went with it, fully expecting that by that time the truant would have made his appearance there.

But he had not. Rosaline had prepared the tea and toast, according to orders, but no Bell was there to partake of it. Nancy Tomson shared it instead. All the rest of the evening Dame Bell was looking out for him; and exchanging suggestions with her neighbours, who kept dropping in. Rosaline scarcely spoke: never unless she was spoken to. The same cold white hue sat on her face, the same involuntary shiver, lasting now but a moment, shook at times her frame. The gossips gazed at her with curiosity—as a specimen of the fright those dreaded Whistlers had power to inflict.

They sat up later than usual, waiting for Bell, but waiting in vain, and then they went to rest. Mrs. Bell did not sleep as well as usual: she was disturbed with doubts of where he could be, and by repeated fancyings that she heard his step outside. Once she got up and opened the casement, and looked out; but there was nothing to be seen, save the great Bare Plain lying bleak and silent under the silver moonlight.

So this morning she was again up betimes, for she surely believed the day must bring him; and the house work went on as usual. The miners had gone to work again, and all was quiet out of doors.

It had been another night of sleeplessness for Rosaline, another prolonged space of remorse and terror. She had undressed and got into bed; and there she lay until morning, living through her fits of despondency, and striving to plan out for the future. To stay at Trennach would, she felt, be simply impossible; if she did, she should die of it: she firmly believed that only to pass by the Bottomless Shaft again and look at it would kill her. Discovery must come, she supposed, sooner or later; but she dared not stay in the place to face it.

Her mother's sister had married a Cornish man, who kept a shop in Falmouth. His name was John Pellet, and he was cousin to Blase Pellet's father. So that in point of fact there was no relationship between the Bells and Blase, although Blase enlarged upon their "cousinship" and Rosaline admitted it. They were only connections. Mrs. Pellet had a small business as a milliner: she had no children and could well attend to it. She and her husband, what with his trade and her work, were very comfortably off. She was fond of Rosaline and frequently had her at Falmouth. It was to this refuge that Rosaline's thoughts were now turned.

"Mother," she said, coming into the kitchen after putting the upstairs rooms in order, Mrs. Bell having this morning undertaken to wash up the breakfast things, "mother, I think I shall go to Falmouth."

"Go where?" cried Dame Bell in her surprise.

"To Aunt Pellet's."

"Why, what on earth has put that in your head, Rose?"

Rosaline did not answer immediately. She had caught up the brass ladle, that chanced to lie on the table, and a piece of wash-leather from the knife-box, and was rubbing away at the ladle.

"Aunt will be glad to see me, mother. She always is."

"Glad to see you! What of that? Why do you want to go just now?—And what are you polishing up at that ladle for?" went on Mrs. Bell, uniting the two grievances together. "They brasses and tins had a regular cleaning last Saturday, for I did 'em myself."

Again Rosaline did not speak. As Mrs. Bell glanced at her, waiting for some rejoinder, she was struck with the girl's utter pallor, her look of misery altogether. Rosaline burst into tears.

"Oh mother, don't hinder me?" she cried imploringly, dropping the ladle with a clatter, and raising her hands in supplication. "I *can't* stay here. I must go away."

"You are afraid of hearing the Seven Whistlers again!"

"Let me go, mother; let me go!" piteously sobbed Rosaline. And her mother thought she had never seen anybody in so deplorable a state of agitation before.

"Well, well, child, we'll see.—I wish the Whistlers had been somewhere! It is most unreasonable to let them take hold on you in this way. A bit of an absence will put you all right again and drive the thoughts out of your head. You shall go for a week, child, as soon as your father comes home."

"I must go to-day," said Rosaline.

"Go to-day!"

"Don't keep me, mother," besought Rosaline. "You don't know what it is for me here. These past two nights I have never once closed my eyes; no, not for a moment. Let me start at once, mother! oh mother, let me go! I shall have brain fever if I stay."

"Well, I never!" cried Mrs. Bell, better words failing her to express her astonishment. "I never did think you could have put yourself into this unseemly fantigue, child; no, not for all the Whistlers in the air. As to starting off to Falmouth to-day, why you could not have your things ready."

"They can be ready in half an hour," returned Rosaline eagerly, her lips feverish with excitement. "I have already put them together."

"Well, I'm sure!—taking French leave, in that way, before you found whether you might go or not! There, there; don't begin to cry and shake again. There's an afternoon train. And—and perhaps your father will be in before that."

"It is the best train I could go by," said Rosaline, turning to hang up the polished brass ladle on its hook by the dresser.

"It's not the best; it's the worst," contradicted Mrs. Bell. "It does not get into Falmouth till night."

"Oh yes it does," said Rosaline anxiously: "quite early enough. Why, mother, I shall be at Aunt Pellet's soon after dark." And she crossed the kitchen with a quicker step than had been seen since that past miserable Tuesday night, and opened the staircase door.

"And suppose your father does *not* come home first?" debated Mrs. Bell, only half pleased at the tacit leave she had given. "How will you reconcile yourself to go away in the uncertainty, Rose?"

Rose did not answer. She only shut the door and ran up the stairs.

"What in the world does ail the child?" exclaimed Dame Bell, considerably put out. "It's my belief the fright has turned her head."

She made no further opposition to the journey. A discerning woman in most kinds of sickness, she recognised the fact that change of some sort might be necessary for Rosaline. Still Bell did not return, and still the day went on.

In the afternoon Rosaline started, with a band-box and hand-bag, Nancy Tomson had volunteered to accompany her to the station.

"I might perhaps have managed the walk to the train: I don't know; it's a goodish step there and back," said Dame Bell as Rosaline stood before her, to say good-bye. "But you see, child, I want to wait in for your father. I'd not like him to find an empty house on his return."

Rosaline burst into a fit of sobbing, and laid hold of her mother as if she were seeking protection from some terror. And once again Mrs. Bell was puzzled, and could not make her out at all.

"Oh mother dear, take care of yourself! take care of yourself! And forgive me for all the ill I have ever done! Forgive, forgive me!"

"Goodness bless me, child, there's nothing to forgive that I know of!" testily cried Dame Bell, not accustomed to this kind of sensational leave-taking. "I shall have care of myself; never fear. Mind you have care of *your*self, Rose: them steam railways be risky things to travel by: and give my love to your aunt and respects to Pellet."

"And we'd better be going," put in Nancy Tomson, who had got on her Sunday cloak and bonnet for the occasion. "They trains don't wait for nobody."

They were in ample time for this one: perhaps Rosaline had taken care of that: arriving, in fact, twenty minutes too soon. Rosaline got into it when it came up, and was steamed away.

In returning Nancy Tomson met Frank Raynor. He was on horseback; riding along very leisurely.

"Good day," said he, nodding to her in passing. "Been out gallivanting?" he added in his light way.

"I've been a seeing Rosaline Bell off by one o' they trains, sir," answered the woman. And Frank checked his horse as he heard it and sat as still as a statue.

"Where is she gone to?"

"Off on a maggot to Falmouth. They Whistlers went and give her a prime fright, sir: she've hardly done shaking yet. She be gone to her aunt's to forget it."

"Oh to be sure," carelessly assented Frank: and rode on.

A few minutes aftewards, when near Trennach, he met Mrs. St. Clare's carriage; herself, two ladies, and Lydia seated in it. The coachman pulled up by orders. Of course Frank had to do the same.

"Have you been to the Mount, Mr. Raynor?"

"No, I have been across to Pendon," he answered, keeping his hat off; and the breeze took advantage of that to stir the waves of his bright hair.

"This makes two days that we have seen nothing of you," said Mrs. St. Clare. "You have not been near us since Tuesday night."

A faint flush passed over his face. He murmured something about having been very busy himself—concluded they were occupied—speaking in a rather confused manner, not at all like the usual ready one of Frank Raynor.

"Well, we shall see you this evening, Mr. Raynor. You are coming to dine with us."

Very hastily he declined the invitation. "I cannot come, thank you," he said. "I shall have patients to see, and must stay at home."

"But you must come; you are to come," rejoined Mrs. St. Clare. "I have seen Dr. Raynor, and he has promised that you shall. Finally, Mr. Raynor, you will very much oblige me by doing so."

What further objection could Frank make? None. He gave the required assent, together with a sweeping bow, as the carriage drove on.

"What a bright-looking, handsome man!" exclaimed one of the ladies to Mrs. St. Clare. "I really do not remember, though, to have seen him the night of the ball, as you say I did."

"Oh, he stuck himself in a corner all the night," put in Lydia. "I don't believe he came out of it once, or danced at all."

"He is too good-looking for a doctor. I should tremble for my daughters' hearts."

"*Being* a doctor, there is, I hope, no cause for me to tremble for those of mine," haughtily rejoined Mrs. St. Clare. "Not but that he is of fairly good family and expectations: the eldest son of Major Raynor and the heir to Eagle's Nest."

Mrs. St. Clare, unconsciously to herself, was not altogether correct in this statement. But it may go for the present.

Frank rode home. Dr. Raynor was out; and he went into the parlour to Edina. She sat in the bow window, darning stockings.

"Why did Uncle Hugh promise Mrs. St. Clare that I should dine at the Mount to-night? Do you know, Edina?"

"Because she invited you, I suppose. I saw the carriage at the door and papa standing at it as he talked to them. Don't you care to go?"

"Not this evening—particularly."

"Papa just looked in here afterwards and said would I tell you that you were to dine at the Mount. I thought you were fond of dining there, Frank."

"So I am sometimes. Where's Uncle Hugh."

"He has been sent for to the parsonage. Mr. Pine is not well."

Again Frank Raynor—and this time sorely against his will—sat at Mrs. St. Clare's brilliant dinner table. He could see why she had made so great a point of his coming: but one gentleman was present besides himself. In fact, there was only Frank in all Trennach to fall back upon. Dr. Raynor never dined out: the Rector pleaded ill-health. Most of the guests who had been staying in the house had left it this morning after their two nights' sojourn: those remaining—General Sir Arthur, Lady, and Miss Beauchamp, and a young married woman, Mrs. Fox—were to leave on the morrow. It fell to Frank's lot to take in Lady Beauchamp: she it was who had expressed doubts of the stability of young ladies' hearts, if exposed to the attractions of Mr. Raynor. Margaret, as it chanced, sat on Frank's left hand; and Margaret, for the time being, was supremely happy.

"Are you better than you were on Tuesday night, Mr. Raynor?" she took occasion to ask him in a whisper, when there was a great buzz of conversation going on.

"Better? I was not——" Not ill, Frank was going to respond in surprise, and then recollected himself. "Oh, thank you, yes, Margaret. I was rather out of sorts that night."

"Mr. Raynor, what is this story about some man being lost?" asked Mrs. St. Clare, from the head of the table. "One of the miners, we hear, has disappeared mysteriously and cannot be found."

Frank's face flushed hotly, and he would have given the world to avoid the subject. But he could not: he had to relate the particulars.

"But where is it supposed that he can be, this Josiah Bell?" asked the General. "Where should *you* think he is, Mr. Raynor?"

Perhaps no one at the table, with the exception of Margaret, noticed that the young surgeon was somewhat agitated by the topic: that his breath seemed a little laboured as he answered the repeated questions, and that his complexion changed from red to pale. Margaret silently wondered why the disappearance of a miner should affect *him*.

"Are there any old pits, used out and abandoned, that the man could have fallen into?" asked the sensible General.

A strangely-dark flush now on Frank Raynor's face. A strange hesitation in his voice, as he replied.

"Not—not any—easy of access, I fancy, Sir Arthur."

"Well, the man must be somewhere, dead or alive. You say it is not at all thought that he would run away."

"Oh, no; his friends say he would not be likely to do that."

"He has a very beautiful daughter, has he not?" spoke Lydia to Frank, from the opposite side of the table.

"Yes, she is nice-looking."

"Nice-looking is not the word for it, Mr. Raynor—as we are told," persisted Lydia. "We hear she is strictly, faultlessly beautiful. Fancy that, for the daughter of a common mining man!"

Miss St. Clare's tone seemed to savour of mockery—as her tones often did. Frank, straightforward himself and true-hearted to the core, answered rather warmly.

"The man has come down in life; he was not always a common miner: and Rosaline is superior in all ways to her station. She *is* very beautiful."

"You seem to know her well."

"Oh, very well," carelessly replied Frank.

"We should not have been likely to hear of the affair at all: of the man's disappearance, or that he had a daughter who was celebrated for her fine looks: but for mamma's maid," said Lydia, more scornfully; for in truth she considered it a condescension even to speak of such people. "Tabitha has relatives in Trennach: she paid them a visit this morning, heard the news, and entertained us with it on her return."

"I should like to see this Rosaline," spoke Lady Beauchamp. "I am a passionate admirer of beauty. You do, by some rare chance, now and again, find it wonderfully developed in a girl of the lower classes."

"Well, it is to be hoped the poor man will be found all right," concluded Sir Arthur.

And, with that, the conversation turned to some other topic—to Frank's intense relief. But Margaret St. Clare still marvelled at the interest he had betrayed: and she was fated to remember it, to her cost, in the time to come.

(*To be continued.*)

THE ANGELS' MUSIC.

HOW the Squire came to give in to it, was beyond the ken of mortal man. Tod turned crusty; called the young ones all the hard names in the dictionary, and said he should go out for the night. But he did not.

"Just like her!" cried he, with a fling at Mrs. Todhetley. "Always devising some rubbish or other to gratify the little reptiles!"

The "little reptiles" applied to the school children at North Crabb. They generally had a treat at Christmas; and this year Mrs. Todhetley said she would like it to be given by us, at Crabb Cot, if the Squire did not object to stand the evening's uproar. After vowing for a day that he'd not hear of it, the Squire (to our astonishment) gave in, and said they might come. It was only the girls: the boys had their treat later, when they could go in for out-of-door sports. After the Pater's concession, she and the school-mistress, Miss Timmens, were as busy planning-out the arrangements as two bees in a honeysuckle garden.

The evening fixed was the last in the old year—a Thursday. And the preparations seemed to be in full flow from the Monday previous. Molly made her plum-cakes and loaves on the Wednesday; on the Thursday, after breakfast, the Mater went to the kitchen to help with the savoury pork-pies and the tartlets. To judge by the quantity provided, the school would require nothing more for a week to come.

The Squire went over to Islip on some matter of business, taking Tod with him. Our children, Hugh and Lena, were spending the day with the little Letsoms: who would come back with them for the treat. The white deal board under the kitchen window was raised on its iron legs; before it stood Mrs. Todhetley and Molly, busy with the mysteries of pastry-making and patty-pan filling. I sat on the edge of the board, looking on. The savoury pies were done, and in the act of baking, a tray-load at a time; every now and then Molly darted into the back kitchen, where the oven was, to look after them. For two days the snow had come down thickly; it was falling still in great flakes; far and near, the ground and landscape showed white and bright.

"Johnny, if you will eat the jam, I shall have to send you away."

"Put the jar on the other side then, good mother."

"Ugh! Much jam Master Johnny 'ud leave for the tarts, let him have his way," struck in Molly, more crusty than her own pastry: when I declare I had only dipped the wrong end of the fork in three or four times. The jam was not hers.

"Mind you don't give the young ones bread-and-scrape, Molly," I retorted, catching sight of no end of butter-pats through the open door. At which advice she only threw up her head.

"Who is this, coming up through the snow?" cried the Mater.

I turned to the window and made it out to be Mrs. Trewin: a meek little woman who had seen better days, and tried to get her living as a dressmaker since the death of her husband. She had not been good for very much since: seemed never quite to get over the shock. Going out one morning, as usual, to his duties as an office clerk, he was brought home dead. Killed by an accident. It was eighteen months ago now, but Mrs. Trewin wore deep mourning yet.

Not standing upon ceremony down in our country, Mrs. Todhetley had her brought into the kitchen, going on with the tartlets all the same, while she talked. Mrs. Trewin had come up about a frock she was making for Lena—the trimming ran short. The Mater told her she was too busy to see to it then, and was very sorry she should have come through the snow for such a trifle.

"'Twas not much further, ma'am," was her answer: "I had to go out to the school to fetch home Nettie. The path is so slippery, through the boys making slides, that I don't altogether like to trust the child to go to and fro to school by herself."

"As if Nettie would come to any harm, Mrs. Trewin!" I put in. "If she went down, 'twould only be a Christmas gambol."

"Accidents happen so unexpectedly, sir," she answered, a shadow passing over her sad face. And I was sorry to have said it: it had put her in mind of her husband.

"You are coming up this evening, you know, Mrs. Trewin," said the mother. "Don't be late."

"It is very good of you to have asked me, ma'am," she answered gratefully. "I said so to Miss Timmens. I'm sure it will be something new to me to have such a treat. Nettie, poor child, will enjoy it too."

Molly came banging in with a tray of pies, just out of the oven. The Mater told Mrs. Trewin to take one, and offered her a glass of beer.

But, instead of eating the pie, she wrapped it in paper to take with her home, and declined the beer, lest it should give her the headache for the evening.

So Mrs. Trewin took her departure; and, under cover of it, I helped myself to a pork-pie. Weren't they good! After that, the morning went on again, and the tart-making with it.

The last of the paste was being used up, the last of the jam jars stood open, and the clock told us that it was getting on for one, when we had another visitor: Miss Timmens, the schoolmistress. She came in, stamping the snow from her shoes on the mat, her thin figure clad in an old straight-down cloth cloak, and her chronic red face blue.

"My word! It is a day, ma'am, this is!"

"And what have you come through it for!" asked the Mater. "About the forms? Why, I sent word to you by Luke Mackintosh that they would be fetched at two o'clock."

"He never came, then," said Miss Timmens, irate at Luke's negligence. "That Mackintosh is not worth his salt——What delicious-looking tartlets!" exclaimed she, as she sat down. "And what a lot of them!"

"Try one," said the mother. "Johnny, hand them to Miss Timmens."

"That silly Sarah Trewin has gone and tumbled down," cried Miss Timmens, as she thanked me and took a bite out of the tartlet. "Went and slipped upon a slide near the school-house. How delicious this tart is!"

"Sarah Trewin has!" cried the Mater, turning round from the board. "Why, she was here an hour ago. Has she hurt herself?"

"Just bruised all the one side of her black and blue, from her shoulder to her ankle," answered Miss Timmens. "Those unruly boys have made slides all over the place, ma'am; and Sarah Trewin must needs go down upon one, not looking, I suppose, to her feet. She had but just turned out of the school room with Nettie."

"Dear, dear! and she looks so unable to bear a fall!"

"Of course it might have been worse, for there are no bones broken," said Miss Timmens. "As to Nettie, the child was nearly frightened out of her senses; she's sobbing and crying yet. Never was such a timid child as that."

"Will Sarah Trewin be able to come this evening?"

"Not she, ma'am. She'll be as stiff as buckram for days to come. I'd like to pay out those boys—making their slides on the pathway and endangering people's lives! Nichol's not half strict enough with them; and I'm tired of telling him so. Tiresome, rude monkeys! Not that my girls are a degree better: they'd go down all the slides in the parish, let 'em have their way. What with them, and what with these fantastical notions of the new parson, I'm sure my life's a martyrdom."

The Mater smiled over her pastry. Miss Timmens and the parson, civilly polite to one another, were mentally at daggers' drawn.

The time I am writing of was previous to the movement, recently set-in, for giving to the masses the same kind of education as their betters have; but our new parson at Crabb was before his age in these ideas. To experienced Miss Timmens, and to a great many more clear-sighted people, the best word that could be given to the movement was "fantastical."

"He came in yesterday afternoon at dusk," she resumed, "when I was holding my Bible class. 'And what has been the course of instruction to-day, Miss Timmens?' asked he, as mild as new milk, all the girls gaping and staring around him. 'It has been reading, and

writing, and summing, and spelling, and sewing,' said I, giving him the catalogue in full: 'and now I'm trying to teach them their duty to Heaven and to one another,' I summed up. 'And according to my old-fashioned notion, sir, if a poor girl acquires these matters thoroughly, she is a deal more fitted to go through life in the station to which God has called her (as the catechism says), than she would be if you gave her a course of fine mincing uppishness, with your poetry and your drawing and your embroidery.' Oh, he gets his answer from me, ma'am."

"Mr. Bruce may be kind and enlightened, and all that," spoke Mrs. Todhetley, "but he certainly seems inclined to carry his ideas beyond reasonable bounds, so far as regards these poor peasant children."

"Reasonable!" repeated Miss Timmens, catching at the word, and her thin, sharp nose turned scarlet with excitement. "The worst is, that there's no reason in it. Not a jot. The parson's mind has gone a little bit out of its balance, ma'am; that's my firm conviction. This exalted education applied to young ladies would be all right and proper: but where can be the use of it to these poor girls? What good will his accomplishments and his branches of grand learning do them? His conchology and his meteorology, and all the rest of his ologies? Of what service will it be to them in future?"

"I'd have got my living nicely, I guess, if I'd been taught them things," satirically struck in Molly, unable to keep her tongue longer. "A fine cook I should ha' made!—kept all my places a beautiful long length o' time! I'd not come with such flighty talk to the Squire's, Miss Timmens, if 'twas me."

"The talk's other people's; 'tisn't mine," fired Miss Timmens, turning her wrath on Molly. "That is, the notions are. You had better attend to your baking, Molly."

"So I had," said Molly. "Baking's more in my line than them other foreign jerks. But well I should ha' knowed how to do it if my mind had been cocketed up with the learning that's fit for lords and ladies."

"Is not that my argument?" retorted Miss Timmens, flinging the last word after her as she went out to her oven. "Poor girls were sent into the world to work, ma'am, not to play at being fine scholars," she added to the Mater, as she got up to leave. "And, as sure as we are born, this new dodge of education, if it ever gets a footing, will turn the country upside down."

"I'm sure I hope not," replied the mother in her mild way. "Take another tart, Miss Timmens. These are currant and raspberry."

The company began to arrive at four o'clock. The snow had ceased to fall; it was a fine, cold, clear evening, the moon very bright. A large store-room at the back of the house had been cleared out, and a huge fire made in it. The walls were decorated with evergreens, and tin

sconces holding candles; benches from the school-house were ranged underneath them. This was to be the principal play-place, but the other rooms were open. Mrs. Hill (formerly Mrs. Garth, who had not so very long before lost poor David) and Maria Lease came up by invitation to help Miss Timmens with the children; and Mrs. Trewin would have come but for her fall on the slide. Miss Timmens appeared in full feather: a purple gown of shot silk, with a red waist-band, and red holly berries in her lace cap. The children, timid at first, sat round on the forms in prim stillness, just like so many mice who feared to have their heads snapped off by the cat.

By far the most timid of all was a gentle little thing of seven years old, got up like a lady; white frock, black sash and sleeve ribbons, pretty white socks and low shoes. She was delicate-featured, blue-eyed, had curling flaxen hair. It was Nettie Trewin. Far superior she looked to all of them; out of place, in fact, amid so many coarser natures. Her little arm and hand trembled as she clung to Miss Timmens' gown.

"Senseless little thing," cried Miss Timmens, "to be afraid in a beautiful room like this, and with all these kind friends around her! Would you believe it, Mr. Johnny, that I could hardly get her here? Afraid, she said, to come without mother!"

"Oh, Nettie! Why, you are going to have lots of fun! Is mother better this evening?"

"Yes," whispered Nettie, venturing to take a peep at me through her wet eyelashes.

The order of the day was this. Tea at once, consisting of as much bread and butter and plum cake as they could eat; games afterwards. The savoury pies and tartlets later; more cake to wind up with, which, if they had no room for, they might carry home.

After all signs of the tea had disappeared, and our neighbours, the Coneys, had come in, and several round rings were seated on the floor at "Hunt-the-Slipper," I, chancing to draw within earshot, found Miss Timmens had opened out her grievance to the Squire—the interference of the parson with the school.

"It would be reversing the proper and natural order of things, as *I* look upon it," she was saying; "to give an exalted education to those who must get their living by the sweat of their hands and brow; as servants, and what not. Do you think so, sir?"

"Think so! of course I think so," spluttered the Squire, taking up the subject hotly as usual. "It's good for them to read and write well, to add up figures, and know how to sew, and clean, and wash, and iron. That's the learning they want, whether they are to pass their lives serving in families, or as the wives of working men."

"Yes, sir," acquiesced Miss Timmens, in a glow of satisfaction, "but you may as well try to beat common sense into a broomstick as into

Mr. Bruce. The other day—what, is it you again, Nettie!" she broke off, as the little white-robed child sidled up and hid her head in what appeared to be her haven of refuge—the folds of the purple gown. "Never was such a child as this, sir, for shyness. When put to play with the rest, she'll not stay with them. What do you think you are good for?"—rather wrathfully. "Do you suppose the gentlefolk are going to eat you, Nettie?"

"There's nothing to be afraid of, little lassie. What child is it?" added the Squire, struck with her appearance.

"Tell your name to the Squire," said Miss Timmens, with authority. And the little one lifted her pretty blue eyes appealingly to his face, as if beseeching him not to bite her.

"It's Nettie Trewin, sir," she said, in a soft whisper.

"Dear me! Is that poor Trewin's child! She has a look of her father too. A delicate little maid."

"And silly also," added Miss Timmens. "You came here to play, you know, Nettie; not to hide your face. What are they all stirring at, now? Oh, going to have 'Puss in the Corner.' You can play at that, Nettie. Here, Jane Bright! Take Nettie with you and attend to her: she has not had any play at all."

A tall, awkward girl stepped up: slouching shoulders, narrow forehead, stolid features, coarse hair all ruffled; thick legs, thick boots; and seized Nettie's hand.

"Yes, sir, you are right: the child is a delicate, dainty little thing, quite a contrast to most of these other girls," resumed Miss Timmens, in answer to the Squire. "Look at that one who has just fetched Nettie away: she is but a type of the rest. They come, most of them, of coarse, stupid parents, and will be no better to the end of the chapter, whatever education you may try to hammer into them. As I said to Mr. Bruce the other day when—Well, I never! There he is!"

The young parson caught her eye, as he was looming in. Long coat, clerical waistcoat, no white tie to speak of round his bare neck; quite à la mode. The new fashions and the new notions that Mr. Bruce went in for, were not at all understood at North Crabb.

The Squire had gone on at first against the party; but no face was more sunshiny than his, now that he was in the thick of it. A select few of the children, with ours and the little Lawsons, had appropriated the dining-room for "Hunt the Whistle." The Pater chanced to look in just before it began, and we got him to be the hunter. I shall never forget it as long as I live. I don't believe I had ever laughed as much before. He did not know the play, or the trick of it: and to see him whirling himself about in search of the whistle as it was blown behind his back, now seizing on this bold whistler, believing he or she must be in possession of the whistle, and now on that one, all unconscious that the whistle was fastened to the back button of his own coat; and to

look at the puzzled wonder of his face as to where the whistle could possibly be, and how it contrived to elude his grasp, was something to be remembered. The shrieks of laughter might have been heard over at the Ravine. Tod had to sit down on the floor and hold his sides; Tom Coney was in convulsions.

"Ah—I—ah—what do you think, Mr. Todhetley," began Bruce, with his courteous drawl, catching the Squire, as he emerged, red and steaming, from the whistle-hunt. "Suppose I collect these young ones around me and give them a quarter of an hour's lecture on pneumatics? I've been getting up the subject a little."

"Pneumatics be hanged!" burst forth the Pater, more emphatically than politely, when he had taken a puzzled stare at the parson. "The young ones have come here to *play*, not to have their brains addled. Be shot if I quite know myself what 'pneumatics' means. I beg your pardon, Bruce. You mean well, I know."

"Pneumatics!" repeated old Coney, taking time to digest the word. "Don't you think, parson, that's more in the department of the Astronomer Royal?"

One required a respite after the whistle-hunt. I put my back against the wall in the large room, and watched the different sets of long tails, then pulling fiercely at Oranges and Lemons. Mrs. Hill and Maria Lease sat side by side on one of the benches, both of them looking as sad as might be, their memories, no doubt, buried in the past. Maria Lease had never, so to say, worn a smiling countenance since the dreadful end of Daniel Ferrar.

A commotion. Half a dozen of the "lemons," pulling too fiercely, had come unto grief on the ground. Maria went to the rescue.

"I was just thinking of poor David, sir," Mrs. Hill said to me, with a sigh. "How he would have enjoyed this scene: so merry and bright!"

"But he is in a brighter scene than this, you know."

"Yes, Master Johnny, I do know it," she said, the tears trickling slowly down her cheeks. "Where he is, all things are beautiful."

In her palmy days Mrs. Todhetley used to sing a song; of which this was the first verse:—

"All that's bright must fade,
The brightest still the fleetest;
All that's sweet was made
But to be lost when sweetest."

Mrs. Hill's words brought it to my memory then; and with it the damping reminder that nothing lasts in this world, whether of pleasure or brightness. All things must fade, or die: but in that better life to come they will last for ever. And David had entered upon it.

"Now, where's that senseless little Nettie?"

The words, spoken sharply, came from Miss Timmens. But if she did possess a sharp-toned tongue, she was good and kind at heart.

The young crew had sat down to the savoury pies and tartlets; Miss Timmens, taking stock of them, missed Nettie.

"Jane Bright, go and find Nettie Trewin."

Not daring to disobey the curt command, but looking as though she feared her portion of the good things would be eaten up during her absence, Jane Bright disappeared. Back she came in a brace of shakes, saying Nettie "was not there."

"Maria Lease, where's Nettie Trewin?" asked Miss Timmens.

Maria turned from the table. "Nettie Trewin?" she repeated, looking about her. "I don't know. She must be somewhere or other."

"I wish to goodness you'd find her, then."

Maria Lease could not see anything of the child. "Nettie Trewin" was called out high and low; but it brought forth no response. The servants were sent to look over the house, with no better result.

"She is hiding somewhere in her shyness," said Miss Timmens. "I have a great mind to punish her for this."

"She can't have got into the rain-water butt?" suggested the Squire. "Molly, you go and look."

It was not very likely: the barrel was quite six feet high. But, as the Squire once got into the water-butt himself when he was a climbing youngster, his thoughts naturally flew to it.

"Well, she must be somewhere," cried the Pater. "She could not sink through the floor."

"Who saw her last?" repeated Miss Timmens. "Do you hear, children? Just stop eating for a minute, and answer."

Much discussion—doubt—cross-questioning. The whole lot seemed to be nearly as stupid as owls. At last, so far as could be gathered, none of them had noticed Nettie since they began Puss-in-the-corner.

"Jane Bright, I told you to take Nettie to play with the rest. What did you do with her?"

Jane Bright commenced her answer by essaying to take a surreptitious bite of her pie. Miss Timmens stopped her midway, and turned her from the table to face the company.

"Do you hear me? Now don't stand staring like a regular gaby! Just answer."

Like a "regular gaby" did Jane Bright stand: mouth wide open, eyes round, countenance bewildered.

"Please governess, I didn't do nothing with her."

"You must have done something with her: you held her hand."

"I didn't do nothing," repeated the girl, shaking her head stolidly.

"Now, that won't do, Jane Bright. Where did you leave her?"

"'Twas in the corner," answered Jane Bright, apparently making desperate efforts of memory. "When I was Puss, and runned across and come back again, I didn't see her."

"Surely, the child has not stolen out by herself and run off home!" cried Mrs. Coney: and the schoolmistress took up the suggestion.

"It is the very thought that has been in my mind the last minute or two. Yes, that's it, depend upon it. She has decamped through the snow and gone back to her mother's."

"Then she has gone without her things," interposed Maria Lease, who was entering the room with a little black cloak and bonnet in her hand. "Are not these Nettie's things, children?" And a dozen voices, all speaking together, hastened to say Yes, they were Nettie's.

"Then she must be in the house," decided Miss Timmens. "She'd not be silly enough to go out this cold night with her neck and arms bare. The child has her share of sense. She has run away to hide herself, and may have dropped asleep."

"It must be in the chimbleys, then," cried free Molly from the back. "We've looked everywhere else."

"You had better look again," said the Squire. "Take plenty of light—two or three candles."

It seemed rather a queer thing. And, while this talking had been going on, there flashed into my mind the old Modena story, related by the poet Rogers, of the lovely young heiress of the Donatis: and which has been embodied in our song "The Mistletoe Bough." Could this timid child have fastened herself down in any place that she was unable to get out of? Going to the kitchen for a candle, I went upstairs, taking the garret first, with its boxes and lumber, and then the rooms. And nowhere could I find the least trace or sign of Nettie.

Stepping into the kitchen to leave the candle, there stood Luke Mackintosh, whiter than death; his back propped against Molly's press, his hands trembling, his hair raised up on end. Tod stood in front of him, suppressing his laughter. Mackintosh had just burst in at the back door in a desperate state of fright, declaring he had seen a ghost.

It's not the first time I have mentioned the man's cowardice. Believing in ghosts and goblins and witches, he could hardly be persuaded to cross Crabb Ravine at night, on account of the light sometimes seen there. Sensible people told him that this light (which, it was true, nobody had ever traced to its source) was nothing but a Will-o'-the-wisp, an ignis-fatuus arising from the vapour; but Luke could not be brought to reason. On this evening it chanced that the Squire had occasion to send Mackintosh to the Timberdale post-office, and the man had now just come in from the errand.

"I see the light, too, I did, sir," he was saying to Tod in a scared voice, as he ran his quaking hand through his hair. "It were dodging about on the banks o' the Ravine for all the world like a corpse-candle. Well, sir, I didn't like that, and I got up out o' the ravine as fast as my legs 'ud bring me, and were amaking straight for

home with my head down'ards, not wanting to see nothing more, when something dreadful met me. All in white it were."

"A man in his shroud, who had left his grave to take a moonlight walk," said Tod, gravely, biting his lips.

"'Twere in grave-clothes, for sure; a long, white garment, whiter nor the snow. I'd not say but it were Daniel Ferrar," added Luke, in the low dread tone that befitted the dismal subject. "His ghost do walk, you know, sir."

"And where did his ghost go to?"

"Blest if I saw, sir," replied Mackintosh, shaking his head. "I'd not ha' looked after it for all the world. 'Twarn't a slow pace I come at, over the field, after that, and right inside this here house."

"Rushing like the wind, I suppose."

"My heart was all a-throbbing and skeering. Mr. Joseph, I *hope* the Squire won't send me through the Ravine after dark again! I couldn't stand it, sir; I'd a'most rather give up my place."

"You'll not be fit for this place, or any other, I should say, Mackintosh, if you let this kind of fear run away with your senses," I put in. "You saw nothing; it was all fancy."

"Saw nothing!" repeated Mackintosh in the excess of injured desperation. "Why, Mr. Johnny, I never saw a sight plainer in all my born days. A great, white, awesome apparition 'twere, that went rushing past me with a wailing sound. I hope you won't ever have the ill-luck to see such a thing yourself, sir."

"I'm sure I sha'n't."

"What's to do here?" asked Tom Coney, putting in his head.

"Mackintosh has seen a ghost."

"Seen a ghost!" cried Tom, beginning to grin.

Mackintosh, trembling yet, entered on the recital, rather improving it by borrowing Tod's mocking suggestion. "A dead man in his shroud come up out a-walking from his grave in the churchyard—which he feared it might be Ferrar, lying on the edge on't, just beyond consecrated ground. I never could abear to go by the spot where he was put in, and never a prayer said over him, Mr. Tom!"

But, in spite of the solemnity of the subject, touching Ferrar, Tom Coney could but have his laugh out. The servants came in from their fruitless search of the dairy and cellars, and stared to see the state of Mackintosh.

"Give him a cup of warm ale, Molly," was Tod's command. And we left them gathered round the man, listening to his tale with open mouths.

From the fact that Nettie Trewin was certainly not in the house, one only deduction could be drawn—that the timid child had run home to her mother. Bare-headed, bare-necked, bare-armed, she had gone through the snow; and, as Miss Timmens expressed it, might just have caught her death.

"Senseless little idiot!" exclaimed Miss Timmens in a passion. "Sarah Trewin is sure to blame me, and to say I might have taken better care of her."

But one of the elder girls, named Emma Stone, whose recollection only appeared to come to her with the digesting of her supper, spoke up at this juncture, and declared that long after Puss-in-the-corner was over, and also Oranges and Lemons, which had succeeded it, she had seen and spoken to Nettie Trewin. Her account was, that in crossing the passage leading from the store-room, she saw Nettie "scrouged against the wall, half-way down the passage, like anybody afeared o' being seen."

"Did you speak to her, Emma Stone?" asked Miss Timmens, after listening to these concluding words.

"Yes, governess. I asked her why she was not at play, and why she was hiding there."

"Well, what did she say?"

"Not anything," replied Emma Stone. "She turned her head away as if she didn't want to be talked to."

Miss Timmens took a long, keen look at Emma Stone. This young lady, it appeared, was rather in the habit of romancing; and the governess thought she might be doing it then.

"I vow to goodness I saw her," interrupted the girl, before Miss Timmens had got out more than half a doubting word: and her tone was truthful enough. "I'm not telling no story 'm. I thought she was crying."

"Well, it is a strange thing you should have forgotten it until this moment, Emma Stone."

"Please 'm, it were through the pies," pleaded Emma.

It was time to depart. Bonnets and shawls were put on, and the whole of them filed out, accompanied by Miss Timmens, Mrs. Hill, and Maria Lease: good old motherly Dame Coney saying she hoped they would find the child safe in bed between the blankets, and that her mother would have given her some kind of hot drink.

Our turn for supper came now. We took it partly standing, just the fare that the others had had, with some added bread and cheese for the Squire and old Coney. After that, we all gathered round the fire in the dining-room, those two lighting their pipes.

And I think you might almost have knocked some of us down with a feather in our surprise, when, in the midst of one of old Coney's stories, we turned round at the sudden opening of the door, and saw Miss Timmens amongst us. A prevision of evil seemed to seize on the mother, and she rose up.

"The child! Is she not at home?"

"No, ma'am; neither has she been there," answered Miss Timmens, ignoring ceremony (as people are apt to do at seasons of anxiety or

commotion) and sitting down uninvited, the chronic red spots on her face having turned blue with cold or dread. "I came back to tell you so, and to ask what you thought had better be done."

"The child must have started for home and lost her way in the snow," cried the Squire, putting down his pipe in consternation. "What does the mother think?"

"I did not tell her of it," said Miss Timmens. "I went on by myself to her house; and the first thing I saw there, on opening the door, was a little pair of slippers warming on the fender. 'Oh, have you brought Nettie?' began the mother, before I coud speak: 'I've got her shoes warm for her. Is she very, very cold?—and has she enjoyed herself, and been good?' Well, sir, seeing how it was—that the child had not got home—I answered lightly: 'Oh, the children are not here yet; my sister and Maria Lease are with them. I've just stepped on to see how your bruises are getting on.' For that poor Sarah Trewin is good for so little that one does not care to alarm her," concluded Miss Timmens, as if she would apologise for her deceit.

The Squire nodded approval, and told me to give Miss Timmens something hot to drink. Mrs. Todhetley, looking three parts scared out of her wits, asked what was to be done.

Yes; what was to be done? What could be done? A kind of counsel was held amid them, some saying one thing, some another. It seemed impossible to suggest anything.

"Had harm come to her in running home, had she fallen into the snow, for instance, or anything of that, we should have seen or heard her," observed Miss Timmens. "She would be sure to take the straight, direct path—the way we came here and returned."

"It might be easy enough for the child to lose her way—the roads and fields are like a wide white plain," observed Mrs. Coney. "She might have strayed aside among the trees in the triangle."

Miss Timmens shook her head in dissent. "She'd not do that, ma'am. Since Daniel Ferrar was found there, the children don't like the three-cornered grove."

"Look here," said old Coney, suddenly speaking up. "Let us search all these places, and any others that she could have strayed to, right or left, on her road home."

He rose up, and we rose with him. It was the best thing that could be done: and no end of a relief, besides, to pitch upon something to do. The Squire ordered Mackintosh (who had not recovered himself yet) to bring a lantern, and we all put on our great coats and went forth, leaving the Mater and Mrs. Coney to keep the fire warm. A black party we looked, amidst the white snow, Miss Timmens making one of us.

"I can't rest," she whispered to me. "If the child has been lying on the snow all this while, we shall find her dead."

It was a still, cold, lovely night; the moon high in the sky, the snow lying white and pure beneath her beams. Tom Coney and Tod, all their better feelings and their fears aroused, plunged on fiercely, now amid the deep snow by the hedges, now on the more level path. The grove, which had been so fatal to poor Daniel Ferrar, was examined first. And now we saw the use of the lantern ordered by the Squire, at which order we had laughed surreptitiously: for it served to light up the darker parts where the trunks of the trees grew thick. Mackintosh, who hated that grove, did not particularly relish his task of searching it, though he was in good company. But it did not appear to contain Nettie.

"She would not turn in here," repeated Miss Timmens, from the depth of her strong conviction; "I'm sure she'd not. She would rather bear onwards towards her mother's."

Bounding here, trudging there, calling her name softly, shouting loudly, we continued our search after Nettie Trewin. It was past twelve when we got back home and met the Mater and Mrs. Coney at the door.

"No. No success. Can't find her anywhere."

Down sank the Squire on one of the hall chairs as he spoke, as though he could not hold himself up a minute longer but was dead beat with tramping and disappointment. Perhaps he was. What was to be done next? What *could* be done? We stood round the dining-room fire, looking at one another like so many helpless mummies.

"Well," said the Pater, "the first thing is to have a drop of something hot. I am half frozen.—What time's that?"—as the clock over the mantel-piece struck one stroke. "Half past twelve."

"And she's dead by this time," gasped Miss Timmens, in a faint voice, its sharpness gone clean out of it. "I'm thinking of the poor widowed mother."

Mrs. Coney (often an invalid) said she could do no good by staying longer and wanted to be in bed. Old Coney said *he* was not going in yet; so Tom took her over. It might have been ten minutes after this—but I was not taking any particular account of the time—that I saw Tom Coney put his head in at the parlour-door, and beckon Tod out. I went also.

"Look here," said Coney. "After I left mother indoors, I thought I'd search a bit about the back here: and I fancy I can see the marks of a child's footsteps in the snow."

"No!" cried Tod, bursting out at the back door and crossing the premises to the field.

Yes, it was so. Just for a little way along the path leading to Crabb Ravine the snow was much trodden and scattered by the large footsteps of a man, both to and fro. Presently some little footsteps, evidently of a child, seemed to diverge from this path and go onwards in rather

a slanting direction through the deeper snow, as if their owner had lost the direct way. When we had tracked these steps half way across the field, Tod brought himself to a halt.

"I'm sure they are Nettie's," he said. "They look like hers. Whose else should they be? She may have fallen down the Ravine. One of you had better go back and bring a blanket—and tell them to get hot water ready."

Eager to be of use, Tom Coney and I ran back simultaneously. Tod continued his tracking. Presently the little steps diverged towards the path, as if they had suddenly discovered their wanderings from it; and then they seemed to be lost in those other and larger footsteps which had kept steadily to the path.

"I wonder," thought Tod, halting as he lost the clue, "whether Mackintosh's big ghost could have been this poor little white-robed child? What an idiotic coward the fellow is! These are his foot-marks. A slashing pace he must have travelled at, to fling the snow up in this manner!"

At that moment, as Tod stood facing the Ravine, a light, looking like the flame of a candle, small and clear and bright as that of a glow-worm, appeared on the opposite bank, and seemed to dodge about the snow-clad brushwood around the trunks of the wintry trees. What was this light?—whence did it proceed?—what caused it? Tod did not know; never had known. He thought of Mack's fright and of the ghost, as he stood watching it, now disappearing in some particular spot, now coming again at ever so many yards' distance. But ghosts had no charms for Tod: meaning no alarms: and he went forward again, trying to get another trace of the little footsteps.

"I don't see what should bring Nettie out here, though," ran his thoughts. "*Hope* she has not pitched head foremost down the Ravine! Confound the poltroon!—kicking up the snow like this!"

But now, in another minute, there were traces again. The little feet seemed to have sprung aside at a tangent, and once more sought the deep snow. From that point he did not again lose them: they carried him in a slanting direction to the low and narrow dell (not much better than a ditch) which just then skirted the bordering hedge of the Ravine.

At first Tod could see nothing. Nothing but the drifted snow. But—looking closely—what was that, almost at his feet? Was it only a dent in the snow?—or was anything lying in it? Tod knelt down on the deep soft white carpet (sinking nearly up to his waist) and peered and felt.

There she was: Nettie Trewin! With her flaxen curls fallen about her head and mingling with the snow, and her little arms and neck exposed, and her pretty white frock all wet, she lay there in the deep hole. Tod, his breast heaving with all manner of emotion, gathered her into his arms, as gently as a sick infant is hushed to

rest by its mother. The white face had no life in it; the heart seemed to have stopped its pulses.

"Wake up, you poor little mite!" he cried, pressing her against his warm side. "Wake up, little one! Wake up, my little frozen snow-bird!"

But there came no response to him in answer. The child lay still and white in his arms.

"Hope she's not frozen to death!" he murmured, a queer sensation taking him. "Nettie, don't you hear me?—My goodness, what's to be done?"

He set off across the field with the child, meeting me almost directly. I ran straight up to him.

"Get out, Johnny Ludlow!" he cried roughly, in his haste and fears. "Don't stop me!— Oh, a blanket, is it? That's good. Fold it round her, lad."

"Is she dead?"

"I'll be shot if I know."

He went along swiftly, hushing her to him in the blanket. And a fine commotion they all made when he got her indoors.

The silly little thing, unable to get over her shyness, had taken the opportunity, when the back door was open, to steal out of it, with the view of running home to her mother. Confused, perhaps, by the bare white plain, or it may be by her own obscured intellects, so drowned in timidity, or probably confounding the back door and its approaches with the front, by which she had entered, she went straight across the field, unconscious that this was taking her in just the opposite direction to her home. It was she whom Luke Mackintosh had met —the great idiot!—and he frightened her with his rough appearance and the bellow of fear he gave, just as much as she had frightened him. Onwards she went, blindly terrified, was stopped by the hedge, fell into the ditch, and lay buried in the snow. Whether she could be brought to life, or whether death had really taken her, was a momentous question.

I went off for Cole, flying all the way. He sent me back again, saying he'd be there as soon as I—and that Nettie Trewin must be a born simpleton.

"Master Johnny!—Mr. Ludlow!—Is it you?"

The words greeted me in a weak panting voice, just as I got to the corner by the store barn, and I recognised Mrs. Trewin. Alarmed at Nettie's prolonged stay, she had come out, all bruised as she was, and extorted the fact—that the child was missing—from Maria Lease. I told her that the child was found—and where.

"Dead, or alive, sir?"

I stammered in my answer. Cole would be up directly, I said, and we must hope for the best. But she drew a worse conclusion.

"It was all I had," she murmured. "My one little ewe lamb."

"Don't sob, Mrs. Trewin. It may turn out to be all right, you know."

"If I could but have laid her poor little face on my bosom to die, and said good-bye to her!" she cried, the tears trickling down. "I have had so much trouble in the world, Master Johnny!—and she was all of comfort left to me in it."

We went in. Cole came rushing like a whirlwind. By-and-by they got some warmth into the child, lying so still on the bed; and she was saved.

"Were you cold, dear, in the snow?—were you frightened?" gently asked the mother, when Nettie could answer questions.

"I was very cold and frightened till I heard the angels' music, mother."

"The angels' music?"

"Yes. I knew they played it for me. After that, I felt happy and went to sleep. Oh, mother, there's nothing so sweet as angels' music."

The "music" had been that of the church bells, wafted over the Ravine by the rarefied air; the sweet bells of Timberdale, ringing in the New Year.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

NAUSICAA.

Dream on, fair Nausicaa, with musing sweet
  Whiling the slow-winged hours; thy love-lit eyes,
Dark as the purple Iris at thy feet,
  Reveal a world of hidden mysteries.
Like rosebuds stirred by breezes from the south,
A tender smile plays round thy curved mouth.

Where are thy thoughts? thou heedest not the gleam
  Of golden daylight lingering in the west;
And mute for thee the music of the stream,
  With lotus lilies sailing on its breast.
While dropping blooms, from apple-blossoms shed,
Scatter their snow unnoticed on thy head.

Thou hearest not the peals of laughter low,
  Beneath the tremulous branches of the lime,
Nor see'st the ball thy white-armed maidens throw,
  To measured cadence of a rythmic rhyme.
No passing sight can charm thy far-off eyes,
Since thou hast love, and love has memories.

The whispering wind that stirs thy floating hair,
  With soft caressing, speaks to thee of *him*,
And, through the darkling, amorous-scented air
  Thou see'st *his* form amid the shadows dim.
Dreaming is sweet, and waking fraught with pain;
Dream while thou canst, for thou must wake again.

E. L.

THE MONASTERY OF SAINT HUGON.[1]

By the Author of "A Night in a Monastery."

IF, reader, it has been your privilege to sojourn for a time in Grenoble and its neighbourhood, you will retain a vivid remembrance of the many delightful excursions it possesses: excursions leading you into into every phase of scenery and busy life. Calm, happy valleys, reposing between their majestic Alpine mountains, many of which never lose their eternal snows. Valleys watered by flowing rivers and rushing torrents, and rippling brooks, and consecrated to the husbandry of corn, and wine, and oil: here green with fair pastures, there abounding in the spreading branches of the mulberry tree.

These trees, here common as currant bushes in England, are cultivated as food for the silkworms, of which almost every village possesses immense breeds. The silk, carded, is sent to Lyons, and in the manufactories of that immense town is converted into that rich material which adorns alike the soft wit and beauty of England, and the sterner eloquence of bar and pulpit. These mulberry trees are found in the valleys. Higher up, on the mountain side, earth yields her fruit in abundant crops of grapes, which in time are sent forth as wine to make cheerful the heart of man. Again we have the olive trees, which yield their oil in due season. So, looking all through Nature, we may exclaim with the psalmist in those wonderful words: "Thou openest Thine hand, O Lord, and fillest all things living with plenteousness."

Every description of scenery, it has been observed, may be found in this neighbourhood. The happy valley, the sunny plain, with its white, never-ending roads, its way-side villages; here sleeping in a hollow, there straggling on a hill-side. We have the Alpine mountains, chain upon chain, tier upon tier, stretching far away into Italy. Mountains rugged and wild, barren and snow-capped; or green, and cultivated, sheltering, high up, droves of cattle, and an occasional deer or chamois; others nothing but dense, almost impenetrable forests, where many a traveller has ere now lost his way, and been seen no more.

Down in the towns you may chance to come upon an old abbey, like that of St. Antoine; that saint who was supposed to be disconsolate for the loss of his cherished pig. Well we remember in our very youthful days the intense enjoyment with which we were wont to enter the booth or Baraque de St. Antoine, that regularly twice a year pitched its tent upon the Place of the old French town sacred to the memory of Home.

There the drama—might it not be written tragedy—was played out to our amazed vision and absorbed imagination; and the prayer of St. Antoine remained for ever stamped upon the mind:

> "Rendez-moi mon cochon, s'il vous plait,
> Il faisait toute ma félicité."

The hearts of the ruffians softened by this tender and touching appeal, the pig would reappear descending from the skies, his tail a blaze of

ST. ANTOINE.

fire—though properly he ought to have reappeared from below through a trap-door. But possibly of trap-doors they had none, and the effect of the present arrangement was undoubtedly grander and more thrilling.

But this abbey of St. Antoine dates somewhat further back than these juvenile days, having existed now nearly a thousand years. It is situated at about an hour's drive from St. Marcellin, and is one of the excursions from Grenoble. It has a wonderful old-world, poverty-stricken look, this abbey, which communicates itself to the little town.

Some portions of it are in ruins; and the immense, half-ruined, half-deserted hospice attached to it, bears about it an inexplicable air of mystery and desolation. In the old days, as the priests and monks died, they were dressed and carried, seated upright in a chair in their cloaks and cowls, and put in a row one beside another in the crypt. This was their burial. There they were left gradually to decay and crumble into dust: there their remains yet lie.

In the towns, bustling and populous, you may chance to alight upon some such old abbey as this: and in some of the wild mountain passes, where you least expect it, far removed from the noisy, nerve-wearing world, you may suddenly come upon the pile of an immense monastery; inhabited or in ruins, according to the date of its foundation, or the vicissitudes of its fortunes: in the latter case, its monks having long since passed away to their account.

One of these I visited. Not by accident, but because it is one of the spots in that neighbourhood that must be seen; and because when once seen it is a thing never to be forgotten, on which memory will dwell in many an after time, and conjure up again, in the quiet hours of the night, or in moments of rest, the extraordinary beauty of its approach.

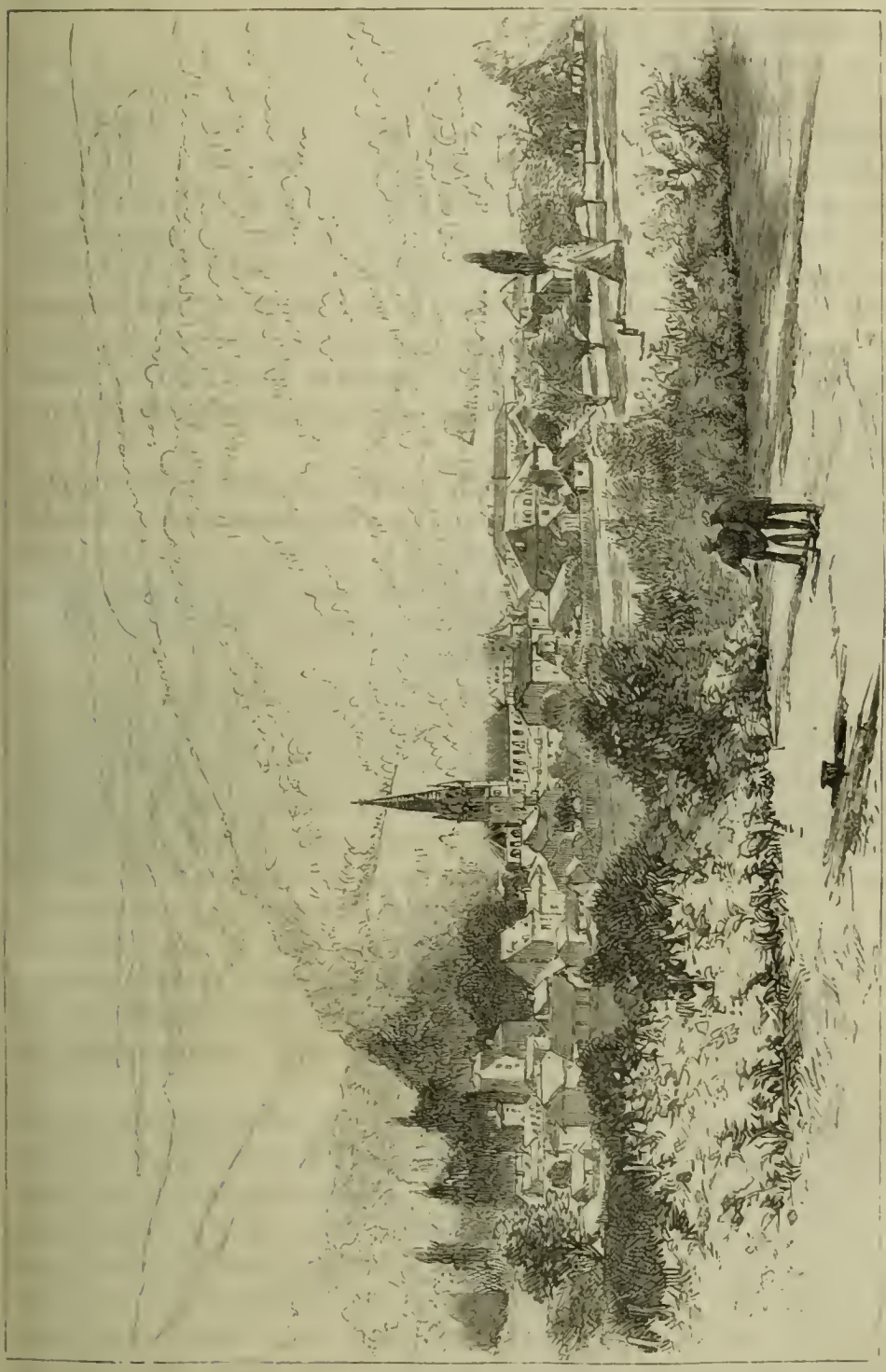
"You have never been to the Monastery of St. Hugon," said M. one evening. "You ought to do so." We were sitting in the Avenue of the Château, watching the sun setting, gilding in rosy tints the snowy mountain tops; marking the twilight gradually dim the scene, and rapidly give place to darkness—there is but little twilight here. It was a matter quickly decided. With all things in our favour—time, inclination, fair weather, what need to hesitate? We determined to start the next morning.

It rose bright and sunny. At five o'clock I swung back the persiennes of my room upon the glorious view described in last month's paper. The sun had not yet warmed the earth; the air was chilly; the mountains looked cold and desolate: a mist still hovered over the fair river. Here and there the blue picturesque smoke was beginning to curl upwards from a cottage chimney.

We had soon started on our walk to the station. The road was white, and three inches thick in dust, but there was no wind to blind us with its storms. Everything was in delightful quiet and repose; that repose and stillness in earth and air which is felt and found at no other time than just before the world awakens. Ere long we reached Gières. Soon after seven the train came up, and in something over an hour we were at Goncelin, where the train had to be quitted for the diligence. From Goncelin, to the town of Allevard was fully an hour and a half's drive: and at Allevard we should have to take a carriage for the yet longer drive to the Monastery of St. Hugon.

The diligence, with its team of four horses, was waiting for passengers,

and we went to the outside front seats. But a fat, well-preserved priest had been beforehand with us, and the seat would not hold three. The



ALLEVARD.

seat on the roof was beyond M.'s climbing powers. Then the priest, with the best grace in the world, and with a cheerful good-nature that proved his heart in the right place, and that all gallantry had not died

out within him when he took the vows of celibacy, gave up his place to M. and retired into the interior. The courtesy was the more gratefully acknowledged that from the interior a great part of the splendid drive to Allevard would have been hopelessly shut out.

The coachman cracked his whip, and we started off full gallop. Now commenced an ascent, and for two hours we were winding about amongst the mountains. Immediately to our right they towered; to our left the valley of the Graisivaudan; and beyond this again another range of mountains. As we ascended high and higher, so we gazed into a greater depth of valley and precipice; until at length it almost tested the strength of one's brain to look downwards. Gradually the mountains closed in upon us, the torrent waters of the Bréda rushing between. First one village, then another, was passed; whilst here and there from some mountain-top stretched forth an image of the Virgin, to record some reputed miracle or supposed interposition of Providence in favour of the neighbourhood.

At one of these villages the kindly and good-natured priest alighted, and made us a low bow, accompanied by a benignant smile addressed more particularly to M. Then, breviaire in one hand, and an umbrella that would have warmed the heart of Mrs. Gamp in the other, he departed towards the little church whose tapering spire sprang up in contrast with the broad mountain side.

On again we started, the driver in his blue blouse cracking his whip, and enjoying the echoes he awoke, throwing out the while a salutation here and there to the cottagers who rushed to their doors to see him pass; until at length we spied in the distance another church, with another tapering spire surmounted by a cross, and surrounded by houses that formed a small town, the whole buried in a valley at the foot of high and expanding mountains that seemed to stand and defy further progress. This was Allevard, and very soon we were clattering down its narrow, ill-paved streets, and gazing with astonishment at some of its houses, which presented an aspect old, dilapidated, and wretched looking as any huts to be found in obscure mountain villages.

Allevard is noted for many reasons. It is a watering-place of importance, frequented by the fashionable and invalid world to so great an extent that in the height of the season it is almost impossible to procure accommodation. The waters of Allevard are mineral and sulphurous, and are especially recommended for diseases of the throat and chest. The season commences the first day of June, and ends on the last day of September. The hotels were closed, doors and shutters; the établissement was deserted. Nothing looks more desolate and dreary than a fashionable place out of season.

Our first duty on quitting the diligence was to obtain a carriage to take us to the Monastery of St. Hugon; and upon being guided to a

certain hostelrie, we met with, as the French would express it, "notre affaire."

Upon demanding a carriage, the man first of all shook his head ominously, as if the thing could not be done. "The season had not commenced." "No one had yet ventured up to St. Hugon." "The road was horrible," &c. &c. Finally he offered to furnish a lumbering cabriolet with nothing but a hard board to sit upon, drawn by one horse, for twenty-five francs. This was sufficiently extortionate, and we protested. At length it was arranged for a much pleasanter waggonette and a pair of horses, for the sum of fifteen francs. It was to

ALLEVARD.

be ready in three-quarters of an hour and drive to the Hôtel du Commerce—the only hotel in the place that was open.

Thither we proceeded in search of something to break our fast. A very light meal at 6 A.M., a journey by rail, and a long drive in a diligence, had sensibly increased the pangs of hunger. The exterior of the hotel was so little prepossessing that we hesitated. We had, however, no other choice, and boldly assaulted the front door—which stood invitingly open. We entered immediately upon the kitchen: an apartment furnished with a long deal table and an enormous stove behind it. Between the table and the stove stood the landlady—the greatest ornament of the place. What a recommendation was she to the excellences of her own larder! what a woman! what an enormous size! and how she seemed to revel in her hot berth and her occupation —that of peeling onions. Half fearful of addressing this female colossus, I yet felt that "ventre affamé," if it have no ears must

possess courage, and boldly advancing into the lion's den, demanded what she could produce at a moment's notice.

The lion, after all, proved very tame and amiable. Your morose specimens are usually of the diminutive genus: your elephants are good-tempered, and obliging: unless finally roused; and then——! Our amiable lion recommended us to wait until one o'clock, when we could be comfortably served with an excellent dinner. But upon being informed that by one o'clock we hoped to be on our road to St. Hugon, the urgency of the case became apparent.

"Ah!" cried she, opening her eyes until they looked like plates, and we, terrified, fell back as we remembered the story of Petit Poucet. "If that was the case she must count up her resources. Would Monsieur et Madame take soup? No? something more substantial? Then she would hastily prepare a delicious omelette with fresh eggs, and a plat de veau. That was all she could manage on the instant. But she was famous for her omelettes. And with good hot coffee and a dessert, perhaps Monsieur et Madame could manage to satisfy the appetite."

We assured her that nothing could be better.

"It was not yet the season," continued our hostess, who rattled on unceasingly. "Very few people had as yet visited Allevard. She was not sure but we were the very first. Going up to St. Hugon, were few? And pray what had they the conscience to demand for a carriage? Not more than ten francs, she hoped. Out of the season a carriage was always to be obtained under the regular price."

We were ushered into a large room with a sanded floor, by a maiden who seemed the very essence of cleanliness and stupidity; but who in a very few minutes brought us in an admirably cooked déjeuner and steaming coffee. M. was tempted to try the "vin du pays," a bottle of which had been placed on the table, and paid for her temerity by a grimace that would have made her fortune on the stage.

The small world turned out to see us depart. The landlady, a huge knife in one hand, the other resting upon her substantial hip, wished us "bon voyage" in a voice that corresponded with her dimensions. We might have been going to the end of the world.

Off at last; and now commenced a drive that would baffle all description. For some distance it led along a tolerably straight, even road, through a long valley. To our right the mountains immediately ascended; to our left a stream rippled over its stony bed. We passed cottages that looked desolate and in ruins, without windows, and, as far as we could see, without doors. Nevertheless they were inhabited. Then, after a certain distance of this tolerably even road, we began to ascend, and from that time continued to ascend to the end of our journey. The road turned and wound about amidst the mountains, which now closed in upon us, and now opened up views of the most

lovely and fertile valley: a valley considered seriously to rival the most beautiful valleys of Switzerland more than any other in France.

The road, cut out of the mountain side, grew rough and uneven. The carriage jolted over the ruts and stones, and tossed to and fro just like a boat chopping about the sea. Occasionally we would go so near to the edge of the precipice that a sudden lurch in the vehicle would disclose to us its awful depth, and make us feel as if the next moment must plunge us into the chasm. Then would come a terrified scream from M. and a "N'ayez pas peur, madame, n'ayez pas peur!" from the benign old coachman, who, probably having performed the journey for the last fifty years, had lost all idea of danger and all sense of the beautiful.

It certainly was at times awful and terrifying to weak nerves: to others more happily organized, this very sense of awe and danger contributed greatly to the enjoyment of the moment. Now a sudden turn brought us face to face with a mountain on whose summit reposed an immense glacier, the blue ice dazzling in the sunshine. Now another turn, and behold a mountain of forest, in which the up-turned gaze might catch the sunshine glinting through the leaves, and making dancing lights and shadows amidst the brambles and shrubs and strawberry roots. Wild violets and primroses abounded. They covered the banks like a rich carpet, and in many places it was impossible to plant the foot without crushing them. Never and nowhere had we seen them so abundant. The large dog-violets attracted by their size and beauty, but, alas, were, of course, scentless; but here and there, hiding, as it were, their diminished heads, we lighted upon a root of small, modest violets, and how delicious was their perfume!

High and higher we ascended; close and closer the sidesof the pass fell in; deep and deeper grew the precipice. Presently we came to a spot where we had to quit the carriage for the purpose of seeing the "Pont du Diable"—the "Devil's Bridge." Now commenced a descent on our own account. There, far below, was the bridge: everything around as wild as could possibly be imagined. Crowning the pass was the immense glacier; on either side of us a thick forest; trees to the very summits of the mountains; here and there a fallen monarch struck by lightning and thrown half-way down the precipice; great pieces of rock again, detached and hurled into the foaming torrent. Now an immense bird shot up suddenly from some hidden point, and went screaming far above our heads across the mountains, to be seen no more: the dying away of the cry making more palpable the stillness and desolation.

But in our descent we wandered out of the right path (a type of so many of our lives), and fell into one muddy and wet with a running stream. A scream from M. Her foot had plunged into a small pool. A tiny boot was held up in dismay; vanity palpably lurked behind tha

distress. "I cannot possibly go on," cried she. "You must explore the bridge alone, and on your return describe what you have seen." I obeyed, and dashed away through brake and briar, until at length, splashed and breathless, but indifferent to all save the surrounding scene, I stood upon the "Devil's Bridge."

Heights above, depths below. The bridge is built of grey stone, and spans the precipice with a single arch. It was constructed some centuries ago for the use of the monks of the monastery. Raised in one night, says the legend, by the devil, upon an understanding with St. Hugon that the first life that passed over it should become his. The bridge erected, the saint himself was the first to pass over it, but he took care to drive on before him—his donkey. The devil, in furious rage, seized the luckless animal and hurled it into the chasm, leaving

CASCADE DU BOUT DU MONDE.

its body to attract the wolves, which ever since have haunted the surrounding forests.

It was appalling to look over the sides of the bridge, appalling to gaze above and below. Far down, at a depth of over 400 feet, the torrent of the Bens rushed angry and foaming over its rocky bed; so far below that it seemed almost lost to view. Clefts in the rocks, and great boulders of stone, turned aside the straight course of its current and impeded its progress. It seemed, indeed, almost a mystery how the bridge could have been constructed in that desolate spot by human ingenuity: and one felt inclined to pardon ignorant superstition for putting faith in any supernatural tradition.

The solitude of the whole scene was fearful—and yet how soothing! Turning and looking down the pass, the great steepness of our late ascent could be realized. Yet we were far from our journey's end. This thought, after a tolerably long reverie, brought me back to things present. I remembered how much remained to be done; how M. had

been left alone half way down the precipice; how the coachman would be waxing impatient. When at length I recovered M., I found she had employed her time in gathering an immense bouquet of cowslips. "I take them home and dry them," she explained. "You can't think how it improves the flavour of the tea. And it is an excellent remedy for measles!"

We soon rejoined the carriage, and continued our way. Every step disclosed fresh beauty and grandeur. Each moment seemed to bring us nearer that great glacier. Here, indeed, we were far away from and above the world, in the very midst of the gigantic Alps. What desolate yet glorious spots these monks invariably chose in which to bury themselves. And in those past centuries, when refinement and civilization in the world were about on a par with such as might be

Cascade du Bout du Monde.

found in the mountains, it is possible to imagine that these monks, less strictly separated from each other than they are now, were happy enough; passing their days in fishing, talking, strolling, a little work, and a certain amount of religious exercise. Harmless lives, at least; if leaving no record of good behind them, leaving none of ill.

At length, almost when the pass appeared to close in utterly and forbid further progress, a sudden turn in the road opened out to view the monastery itself.

At first sight the exterior was sufficiently disappointing; and indeed the whole building is not very interesting. It is less the monastery than the ascent to it that is so wonderful. Yet the ruins were extensive and marvellous enough undoubtedly. The fact that we were visiting the remains of graveyards and chapels, cells and refectories, that centuries ago had teemed with life, was productive of a feeling sad and weird enough to satisfy the most vivid imagination.

The ruins occupied an immense area of ground. It had been a

monastery of the Chartreuse: the same order as that visited on a previous occasion, and described in these pages.* It was founded about the year 1175, by St. Hugon, a bishop of Grenoble, and was twice destroyed by fire. The last building was constructed in the 17th century, but in 1791 was sold. The purchaser quickly demolished the whole structure for the purpose of turning it into an iron and lead foundry, a destination it never fulfilled. A portion of the building is now devoted to a distillery, where they make a liqueur in imitation of that of the Grande Chartreuse, but very inferior.

The third and last building must have been a splendid as well as a most extensive structure. The monks had evidently prepared themselves a long abode, determined to live out here, in peace and solitude, many centuries. But time rolls on, with its chances and changes. Man proposes; he cannot dispose. The lot is thrown into the lap; the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.

Of all countries and nations upon earth, the most uncertain in its chances and changes is France. The revolution that ruined the Grande Chartreuse put an end also to all the hopes and calculations of these worthy monks. True, those who had built the monastery were long since reposing in the cemetery they had allotted to themselves. But that cemetery planned to receive the human dust of a thousand years; and those cloisters that in whispers were to echo the silent footsteps of a thousand years; had scarce told one century of the time, when the monastery was desecrated; its earth yielded to the spade, its strong walls fell crumbling inwards. So here, before its time, in the midst of this vast solitude, reposes this great ruin.

The principal entrance gate, of black and white marble, bears date 1675. This and the front of the structure is in good preservation. But the interior—the cells, the refectory, the cloisters--leave but a trace of ruined walls to show what has been. The portion best preserved is that formerly devoted to the use of strangers. Here visitors may still have refreshment served to them. But the look of the room would alone be enough for an Englishman, whatever the French may tolerate.

"Here," said the guide, as he conducted us over the ruins, "was the chapel," pointing to crumbling walls; "there the refectory," more crumbling walls; "there were the cloisters," a long row of crumbling walls. "That was the cemetery," he continued. "I have planted it with fruit trees, as may be seen. The trees bear excellent fruit. We know it was the cemetery by the plans that exist. And now and then I turn over a skull or a cross-bone in digging the ground. Oui, Monsieur, even now. Que voulez-vous? We must all come to it. And why should the fruit be any the worse? Ma foi! il faut vivre. I sell the fruit at a fair price."

* "A Night in a Monastery," Argosy, Jan. and Feb., 1874.

"Where ignorance is bliss," quoted M. tritely. And two large, rosy apples pocketed that morning at breakfast began to feel somewhat less of a prize than we had thought them.

We followed the guide's description, and filled up in imagination what was lacking in reality. About fifteen minutes' walk from this, but quite out of sight and sound, there is a foundry in full operation; so said the guide; but these were sights and sounds to destroy the romance of such scenes as the present, and we felt no inclination to invade its territories. The echoes of its anvils would for us bear no charms. It was time, too, that we thought of wending our way backwards. So bidding our guide farewell, and wishing him a good crop of apples in harvest time, we once more set out.

Not to return by the same way. Crossing the chasm on a bridge that seemed perilous to life; holding our breath as we looked over; we descended on the opposite bank of the pass. The effect was less grand in descending; but the sensation was perhaps more awful, whilst it certainly looked more dangerous. More than ever the carriage swayed from side to side; more than ever it approached the edge of the precipice, for the road was narrower; and many a time we seemed within a hair's breath of being hurled into the far off rushing torrent.

But the cocher only laughed at M.'s screams; and to her remonstrances, her prayers to drive more slowly (we were already at funeral pace), he only repeated his everlasting "N'ayez pas peur, madame; il n'y a pas d' danger."

Perhaps so. But M. could bear it no longer, and stopping the vehicle for a moment, she sprang out. She would walk a little until the road grew safer.

So we went on, enjoying this wonderful, beautiful nature. Now passing over a road cut through the wood; now coming out into the open; the whole surrounding glorious view of mountain, glacier, forest, precipice, torrent, and far off valley, disclosed in one splendid glance. We once more became children, and gathered cowslips and primroses and violets; and marvelled at the abundance of the earth's riches and the mighty Power that could make these small flowers as wonderful, beautiful, and incomprehensible, in their way, as the very mountains on which they grew.

Down, down, down; until at length, after a long drive that was yet too short, we once more entered the straight piece of road, with its rippling stream and ruinous-looking huts, and drove on to Allevard.

There we found we had full two hours to wait for the return of the diligence to Goncelin. We walked up to the cascade called the "Bout du monde," and admired its beauties, though they seemed tame compared with those we had just seen. Here, too, we came upon

a foundry; the chief foundry in this part of France. It seemed desecration to have built it in the midst of scenes so lovely. Dense smoke poured forth from its chimneys; the rocks re-echoed with the sound of many anvils. But we were tired; the drive had jolted us into a state of bodily misery, and we turned into the church and sat down to rest.

When sufficiently restored, we made our way to the gardens of the établissement, and sat down upon a bench to await the diligence. There we talked over what we had seen, and watched some men washing whole cargoes of bottles, preparing for the coming season: and another man playing at bear on all fours with his little child. She was an ugly little child, and awkward, but he seemed as proud of her as if she had been born beautiful and in the purple. Finally, we brought out our apples, peeled, eat, and enjoyed them like two children, never once casting a thought to the remarks of our guide at the monastery.

Amongst our passengers on the diligence was a nice-looking, lively young woman who was housekeeper to a priest. She alighted at the last village before entering Goncelin, and we could not but admire the taste of the curé in choosing so blooming a damsel to enliven the echoes of his gloomy domain.

At Goncelin we had half an hour to wait for the train, and, entering the quiet café opposite the station, refreshed ourselves with hot coffee dashed with brandy to keep out a possible cold—for in the latter part of our journey a smart shower had fallen. No longer, then, would we have ridiculed the good priest's umbrella, as in the morning!

The train came up, and in due time we reached the little station of Gières. As we walked back along the white, dusty road, we confessed that we had seldom had a pleasanter excursion.

The shades of night had fallen, and eight o'clock long struck when we reached the château. Before entering, for a few moments we wandered into the avenue, and sat down, and watched the stars sparkling as they do not sparkle in less brilliant atmospheres. The moon was rising big and round as a shield, and cast ghostly glimmers, and mysterious, creeping shadows upon the surrounding mountains. Above all, listening to the nightingales as they answered each other in the groves and woods: their melody alone breaking the solemn stillness of the night air.

It was altogether delightful, enchanting, yet somehow most saddening and subduing. And as we passed out of the darkness into the house, like two phantoms of the night, one of us at least almost wished to be a phantom in reality, to haunt and guard for ever these perfect regions.

CHARLES W. WOOD.

ON DUTY.

"HALF-PAST SIX, and no summons!" muttered Mons. André Chavarol, giving a discontented tug at his ample moustache, and indulging in a vague reminiscence of "Il Bacio" with his other hand on the window of his diminutive salon in the Rue Saint-Lazare, adjoining the Passage du Havre. "If old mother Tapin doesn't show more consideration for my white cravats and the brilliancy of my bottines, I shall cut the connection, ma parole! Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday—three blank days, three dinners at thirty-two sous in the Carrefour Gaillon; horrible repasts of india-rubber filets, inscrutable sauces, and Bordeaux grown at Suresnes!"

There must have been something indescribably unpalatable in this latter reminiscence, for M. Chavarol's countenance assumed an expression of intense disgust; and "Il Bacio" was forthwith abandoned for the more stirring march from "Faust," which he drummed so vindictively on the window-pane that a gentle tap at the door, and the subsequent entrance of the concierge in his shirt-sleeves and a blue apron, wholly failed to attract his attention.

"Monsieur!" began Cerberus.

No answer, beyond a redoubled fortissimo of the amateur musician.

"Monsieur André!" he continued, in a louder tone.

"Ha! père Gaillard," exclaimed the other, turning suddenly round. "Anything for me?"

"A letter for monsieur, to be delivered immediately, the commissioner said."

M. Chavarol seized the proffered envelope, tore it hastily open, and ran his eye over the contents of the enclosed note, which were sufficiently laconic, consisting merely of the following words: "Madame de Nerval, 22, Rue de Berlin. Seven precisely."

"C'est bien, père Gaillard," said he. "If Morisseau should happen to look in this evening, you will tell him that I am on duty."

"On duty!" muttered M. Gaillard, as he slowly descended the staircase leading to his own particular domain. "On duty! I should very much like to know what sort of duty calls Monsieur André out two or three times a week and where those mysterious letters come from. As if any lodger had any right to keep secrets from his concierge! That friend of his, Morisseau, is as close as wax; but if I don't worm it out of him somehow or other, my name isn't Aristide Gaillard!"

Meanwhile, M. Chavarol, after glancing at the note he held in his

hand and consulting his watch, retired to give the finishing touch to his toilette in the adjoining chamber, and emerged from thence a few moments later, with a by no means dissatisfied air.

"Ten minutes will take me there," he soliloquised, as he buttoned his light overcoat, and drew on a pair of pearl-grey gloves. "Who is Madame de Nerval, I wonder? and, what's more to the purpose, is her cook a cordon bleu? In the present state of my appetite, that is an uncommonly important question."

So saying, he left the room, carefully locking the door behind him, and swinging the key on his forefinger until he arrived at the porter's lodge, where he attached it to its particular hook; and crossing the street, commenced a leisurely ascent of the Rue d'Amsterdam.

He had scarcely been gone a quarter of an hour, when a stoutish individual of jovial aspect, attired in a shiny black alpaca coat, closely fitting check trousers, and smoking a cigarette, bounded into the sanctum of the concierge; who was discussing with great apparent relish a savoury mess, of which the principal ingredient bore a strong resemblance to onions.

"André at home, père Gaillard?" asked the new-comer.

"No, Monsieur Morisseau," replied that functionary, without rising from his seat: "he bade me tell you if you called, that he was on duty."

"Ah!" said M. Morisseau, unconcernedly, as if the information were exactly what he had expected. "Did he leave any other message?"

"Not a syllable."

"Ah, well; if he *should* come back before midnight, which isn't likely, you may tell him that he will find me at the Brasserie in the Faubourg Poissonnière from nine till ten, and after that at the Café des Variétés. You understand?"

"Pardi! But, Monsieur Morisseau."

"Well?"

"What does Monsieur André mean by saying he is on duty?"

"What do *you* mean, père Gaillard, when you say anything?"

"C'te bêtise!" returned the concierge; "what I say, of course."

"Then the chances are, père Gaillard, that André means what *he* says. Au revoir."

"Nothing to be got out of him," said the porter, shaking his head in despair, as M. Morisseau, with a final nod of adieu, disappeared through the door of the loge. "Ah! if Monsieur André's friend were only a woman!"

As we have no intention of keeping our readers similarly in the dark as regards the mysterious profession exercised by M. Chavarol, it may not be amiss, before proceeding further, to communicate to them certain indispensable details respecting the hero of our sketch. His father, Antoine Chavarol, owner of a small estate in the immediate neigh-

bourhood of Tours, had constantly resided there until his death, which had occurred some ten or twelve years previous to the commencement of this veracious history. At his demise, the house and land attached to it had been sold, and the proceeds divided between André and his younger brother, a sub-lieutenant in a regiment of Chasseurs quartered in Algeria. The property, however, having been heavily mortgaged by M. Chavarol, senior, partly for the education of his sons at the Lycée Napoléon, and partly for the payment of debts contracted by himself, the joint inheritance of the two brothers amounted barely to thirty thousand francs. After having, by the advice of the family notary, invested his share in public securities, André established his head-quarters in Paris, where he had at first more than one opportunity of making the acquaintance of what the French call "la vache enragée," a term equivalent to the hospitable board of our own Duke Humphrey. Like most young men of limited means and without a profession, he applied himself to literature, and at the time when our story begins had become tolerably well known in the little world of journalists; of which his friend, Léon Morisseau, was an influential member, and a dramatic author to boot. The trifling revenue, however, derived from his pen, added to the interest of his fifteen thousand francs, would hardly have sufficed to defray his daily expenses, including the rent of his modest fourth floor in the Rue Saint-Lazare, if chance had not furnished him with another string to his bow.

Among the many representatives of every class of Parisian society with whom, as a newspaper writer, he had come in contact, few were better qualified and none more willing to lend him a helping hand than la Mère Tapin, as she was usually denominated, or Madame Veuve Tapin, as her own cards and prospectuses described her. Madame Tapin's occupations were as multifarious as they were profitable. In addition to being the proprietor of a monthly sheet of fashions, entitled "Le Chic," chiefly patronised (owing to its ultra décolletées tendencies) by the fair denizens of that ill-paved labyrinth of hilly streets in the vicinity of the Rue Bréda, she negotiated marriages and instituted private inquiries with consummate delicacy and circumspection; possessed a larger assortment of feminine apparel, nearly equal to new, than any marchande de toilette in the quarter; and, lastly, undertook to supply at an hour's notice a well-dressed and perfectly presentable "quatorzième," in cases where by accident or mischance the number of invited guests had been unexpectedly reduced to thirteen. These occasions, more frequent than one would be apt to imagine, demanded on her part a considerable degree of tact in the selection of the right man for the right place; and André, who had already won the old lady's heart by a little judicious puffing of "Le Chic" in the smaller literature journals, and who had no objection to an excellent dinner and an honorarium of fifteen francs

out of the twenty received by Madame Tapin, was specially reserved by her for the more aristocratic gatherings, where good looks and gentlemanly manners were a sine quâ non. Thus it was that, on the evening alluded to, our hero mounted the carpeted staircase of No. 22, Rue de Berlin, and was announced by the maître d'hôtel of Madame de Nerval as "Monsieur André."

The majority of the company had arrived before he made his entrée, and were dispersed in groups, sitting or standing, in the prettily-furnished salon of their hostess; some occupied in inspecting the photographic albums on the tables or the water-colour drawings on the walls, others engaged in that desultory and disjointed conversation which ordinarily precedes the summons to the dining-room. Advancing a step to meet the new-comer, Madame de Nerval, a prepossessing and elegantly-dressed blonde, apparently about seven or eight and twenty, graciously returned his salutation; and M. Chavarol, judging the presentation at an end, and aware from past experience that the customary reception of a "quatorzième" was commonly limited to a bow or a curtsy, retired discreetly to a corner of the room, resigning himself, as a matter of course, to the prescribed modesty of his rôle. To his surprise, however, on glancing casually at the lady of the house, he discovered that her eyes were constantly wandering in his direction; and, regarding her more attentively, he fancied that her face was familiar to him and that he had certainly seen her before. But where?

His reflections were cut short by the entrance of the fourteenth and last guest, a stout, red-faced personage, announced as Monsieur Jozan; immediately after whose arrival the folding doors of the adjoining apartment were thrown open, and the welcome tidings, "Madame est servie!" issued from the lips of the major-domo. The dinner progressed much in the usual fashion, and André was not slow to convince himself that, whoever Madame de Nerval might be, her chef was a master of his art; an opinion in which his next neighbour, an elderly gentleman of bland and sociable aspect, appeared entirely to coincide. From him M. Chavarol learnt that the charming donor of the feast had been two years a widow; that the death of her husband had left her mistress of a considerable fortune, as well as of the hotel inhabited by her; and finally that, according to rumour, she was likely ere long to exchange her name of de Nerval for the less patrician appellation of Jozan.

"Who is Monsieur Jozan?" inquired André.

"One of the magnates of the Bourse," replied his informant. "An agent de change, who, if report speaks truth, was rather hard hit last settling day. He has contrived to weather the storm this time; but when a man burns the candle at both ends as he does—" Here he paused, and looked significantly at our hero.

"In what way?" asked the latter. "You forget that he is a stranger to me."

"True," remarked the old gentleman, "and on second thoughts, as his affairs do not concern us, perhaps the less said about them the better. But if I were Madame de Nerval, and had any idea of marrying him, I would only do so on one condition—that all my money should be settled on myself."

At this moment, the lady in question rose from her chair, and the whole party adjourned to the salon for coffee. It was a lovely evening in June, and the windows being partially left open, the orange-blossoms and moss-roses on the balcony diffused an agreeable fragrance through the room. A rubber had been already organised by M. Jozan and three other amateurs of the game; and a young lady, seated at the piano, was lightly fingering Waldteufel's newest waltz. Although aware that his presence was no longer necessary, and conscious that any forgetfulness of his actual position might under the circumstances be deemed presumptuous, and even intrusive, André still lingered, he hardly knew why, and mechanically turned over the leaves of one of the albums lying on the table. While he was thus engaged, the rustling of a silk dress near the spot where he was standing attracted his attention, and looking up, he perceived Madame de Nerval observing him with a peculiar smile.

"Has Monsieur André Chavarol quite forgotten his little playmate Joséphine?" she said.

"Mademoiselle Doligny!" he stammered out. "Pardon me, I should say Madame."

"Hush!" she replied in a low tone. "Not another word now, but do not fail to be here to-morrow at two. I shall expect you."

Andre took the hint, and gently returning the pressure of the delicately gloved hand held out to him, bowed respectfully and silently, and an instant later quitted the room.

"Who is that?" presently asked M. Jozan, who had watched the young man's departure with a certain amount of curiosity from his seat at the whist table.

"An old acquaintance of mine, whom I have not seen for many years," quietly replied Madame de Nerval.

During his walk from the Rue de Berlin to the Boulevard, M. Chavarol had ample matter for reflection; and so absorbed was he by his own thoughts that, had he not instinctively turned to the right on entering the Rue d'Amsterdam, he might ere long have found himself unconsciously exploring the innermost recesses of the Batignolles. It seemed to him an age since he had last beheld Joséphine Doligny; since they had played together in her father's garden at Tours, or wandered hand in hand, in all the joyous freedom of childhood, along the picturesque banks of their native Loire. What changes had

taken place since those happy days, long forgotten, but now once more vividly present to his memory, when he had fondly called her his little wife, and patiently submitted to the capricious ordeal of the "Marguerite," with its alluring "un peu, beaucoup, passionnément," and its inexorably annihilating "pas du tout!" They had never met since the fatal morning when she had entered the carriage destined to convey her to the convent. He had a vague remembrance of having heard in after years of her marriage; but his father's death and his own subsequent departure to Paris had prevented him from ascertaining any further particulars concerning her. He had left her a mere child, and she was now a widow; and, if he had been rightly informed, not likely to remain so long. He tried to argue with himself that nothing could be more natural, but what he had as yet learnt respecting her prétendu was by no means reassuring; and he resolved, for the sake of "auld lang syne," to penetrate if possible the mystery which appeared to envelope the social position of M. Jozan. "Morisseau must know all about him," he thought, and to Morisseau he determined in the first instance to apply.

He had by this time reached the corner of the Rue Montmartre, and was hesitating, like a true Parisian flaneur, whether or not to retrace his steps; when he espied the very man he was in search of, descending the Boulevard with rapid strides.

"I have something to ask you, mon cher," said André.

"And I have something to tell *you*," replied his friend, linking his arm in that of the other; "and good news, ma foi! Do you remember the little comedy in verse you sent to Montigny some six months back? Well, I met the régisseur of the Gymnase an hour ago; he had just posted a letter to you, stating that your piece was accepted, and would be read to the actors to-morrow. If Blanche Pierson will only play the heroine, I'll answer for a success."

"And never would a success come more à propos," said M. Chavarol. "For, after what has happened this evening, la mère Tapin must look out for another quatorzième."

Thereupon he related to his companion the events of the last few hours; his former intimacy with Madame de Nerval, her recognition of him, and the probability of her approaching marriage; and concluded by inquiring if he were acquainted with an agent de change of the name of Jozan.

"Jozan!" exclaimed Morisseau. "My dear fellow, you couldn't have addressed yourself better! I know more about him than he would care to acknowledge, for the apartment I occupy belongs to him, and a very awkward customer he is on quarter-day, I can assure you; but that's not what *you* want to hear. First of all, is the lady in question rich?"

"Rich, young, and beautiful," answered André.

"Never mind the two latter items," coolly observed the other, "though in ordinary cases they count for something. She has money, you say; well then, you may depend upon it, Jozan means to marry her if she will have him."

"Is he so hard up?" asked M. Chavarol.

"He soon will be, at any rate," was Morisseau's reply. "His losses at the Bourse have been enormous of late, and his ill-luck at baccarat in the Rue Royale has become almost proverbial. For further particulars, apply to la petite Sauterelle, of the Folies-Bergère!"

"But," resumed André, recalling to mind the old gentleman's suggestion, "suppose her fortune were tied up, so that he couldn't touch a sou of the capital?"

"Then," said Morisseau, "if Jozan's the man I take him to be, he would contrive to back out, even at the church door. The affair lies in a nutshell; either she likes him sufficiently to accept him on his own conditions, in which case all the talking in the world will never persuade her to the contrary, or she has been strangely misinformed as to his financial position; and it rests with you to undeceive her. Past eleven!" he continued, glancing at his watch. "I shall look in at the Variétés for a few minutes. Will you come?"

"Not to-night," replied M. Chavarol. "I must think the matter over before I sleep, for I shall have work enough on my hands to-morrow."

On his return home an hour later, he found a letter awaiting him. It was the expected bulletin from the régisseur of the Gymnase, appointing twelve o'clock on the following day for the reading of the two-act comedy, "Mieux vaut tard que jamais."

The foyer or green-room of the ancient Théatre de Madame is neither more nor less than an average specimen of its class, being about as dismal and uninviting a locality as can well be imagined; but to André's eyes it appeared a paradise, as he seated himself on one of the baize-covered benches, and listened to the ticking of the clock, pending the arrival of the artists destined to embody the creations of his fancy. The entrance of the stage-manager aroused him from his reverie. Presently the actors and actresses engaged in the piece came straggling in one after another; and exactly at the appointed hour, the courteous and intelligent director of the Gymnase emerged from his private sanctum, shook our hero cordially by the hand, and requested him to take his seat at a table in a corner of the room, on which stood the traditional tumbler and decanter of water for the refreshment of the reader. Slightly nervous at the commencement of his task, André felt speedily reassured by the attention manifested by his auditors; and the approbatory murmurs, which every now and then greeted some lively tirade or happy flight of imagination, became more and more frequent towards the concluding scenes of the second act. As he

finally closed his manuscript, the applause, though to a certain extent moderated by the presence of the manager, was unanimous. The actors were evidently enchanted with their parts, and the charming Mdlle. Pierson, to whose sympathetic talent the principal character had been specially entrusted, confided to the author, with one of her sweetest smiles, her intention of inaugurating the first performance by two of the most bewitching toilettes that the inventive genius of M. Worth and Madame Virot could possibly supply.

It was now nearly half-past one. M. Chavarol, mindful of his promise, took a hasty leave of the manager, and started at once in the direction of the Rue de Berlin : where he was immediately admitted into the boudoir of the fair widow. The interview was long and confidential, and during its progress André had ample opportunity of comparing (greatly, it must be confessed, to the advantage of the latter) his indistinct recollections of the youthful Joséphine with the elegant and accomplished Madame de Nerval. When at length—after fully satisfying her curiosity as to his own past and present career, and excusing rather lamely, on the plea of necessity, what she playfully termed his "monstrous" position as a professional "fourteenth"—he adverted to the real subject of his visit, it was with a secret feeling of jealousy, which he would perhaps have found it difficult to explain. The mere mention, however, of Monsieur Jozan was received with such an irrepressible burst of merriment on the part of the lady that André, though he doubted the evidence of his own ears, stopped short, and stared at her in undisguised amazement.

"Encore lui!" she exclaimed, bursting again into an uncontrollable fit of laughter. "Ce pauvre Jozan! not a day passes without his name being brought up by some one or other in connection with mine! Oh, André, André, I did not expect that from you!"

"I see nothing so very extraordinary," said M. Chavarol, smiling in his turn, "in people alluding occasionally to your intended husband."

Madame de Nerval did her best to look serious, but the attempt was a decided failure.

"Do you really mean what you say?" she inquired.

"I merely echo the common report," he replied, "and conclude from what I hear that he has asked you to be his wife. Am I wrong?"

"You are perfectly right. He *has* asked me—twice; and, as the moth still flutters round the candle, I have every reason to believe that he intends asking me a third time. And then——"

"And then?" repeated André, anxiously.

"I shall have lost a pleasant acquaintance," said the widow, "and he will have no excuse in future for neglecting the Folies-Bergère. You perceive that I am quite au courant," she added. "And now let us drop the subject, and talk about yourself."

Three-quarters of an hour later, as our hero was on the point of quitting the hôtel of the Rue de Berlin, a smart Victoria drove up to the door. In it reclined the portly figure of M. Jozan, attired in a dark blue frock-coat of superlative cut, and wearing a delicate rosebud in his button-hole. So absorbed was he in his own reflections that, after alighting and dismissing the coachman, he passed hastily through the porte cochère without bestowing the slightest glance of recognition on his fellow guest of the evening before, and disappeared into the vestibule, his approach being heralded by two loud strokes on the porter's gong.

"He means business," said M. Chavarol to himself, as he slowly descended the Rue d'Amsterdam. "I should like to see how he will look when he comes out again!"

It may easily be imagined that, having so propitiously renewed his intimacy with Madame de Nerval, André seldom allowed many days to elapse without forming one of the favoured few admitted to her attractive salon; and it required no great amount of penetration on his part to discover that among all its privileged frequenters he was by no means the least welcome. On the first occasion of their meeting, subsequent to M. Jozan's recent interview with her, he ascertained that his surmises as to the motive of that gentleman's visit were correct; and that her definitive rejection of his third proposal had resulted in the immediate transfer of his allegiance to an American heiress of the Quartier Beaujon. However agreeable this news may have been to M. Chavarol, he scrupulously refrained from any undue display of satisfaction. Conscious of a growing partiality for the fascinating widow, and fully aware of the difference between their respective positions, he resolved neither by word nor deed to betray the existence of a feeling which he firmly believed could by no possibility be reciprocated. Whether he were right or wrong in this supposition it would be premature to say. Whatever might be the lady's idea on the subject, she kept her own counsel; and, all dangerous ground being tacitly and as it were by common consent avoided by both parties, their almost daily intercourse ripened into a degree of familiarity far more perilous than perhaps either of them was disposed to admit.

Meanwhile, the rehearsals of "Mieux vaut tard que jamais" went steadily and satisfactorily on. Mysterious paragraphs, adroitly conceived by Morisseau, and ingeniously calculated to excite the curiosity of the subscribers to "Figaro" and "La Vie Parisienne," had already predisposed a considerable portion of the public in favour of the forthcoming novelty; and the first performance of the comedy, supported as it was by the élite of the admirable company of the Gymnase, was eagerly looked forward to as one of the dramatic "évènements" of the season. Nothing had been neglected in or

out of the theatre, to bespeak a favourable hearing for the young author; and it only remained to be seen whether the critical judgment of the audience would endorse or reverse the opinion so confidently expressed by those immediately concerned in the production of his piece.

That point was soon to be decided, for the eventful night had at last arrived. The house was fully and fashionably attended. A baignoire, at some distance from the stage, had been purposely reserved for Madame de Nerval; the remaining places being occupied by one of her lady friends, Morisseau, and, we need scarcely add, André. In the balcony, arrayed in the most ultra-chic toilette that her wardrobe could furnish, and armed with a ponderous opera-glass and gigantic fan, sat the smiling and good-humoured Madame Tapin; and in the remote recesses of the pit, half hidden by the claqueurs, an observant eye might have discovered the bald head and spectacles of M. Gaillard.

The curtain rose, and an expectant silence reigned throughout the crowded salle. The earlier scenes of the play, chiefly devoted to an exposition of the plot, were coldly and inattentively listened to; and if, here and there, a brilliant thought or smart epigrammatic phrase elicited from some solitary enthusiast a low murmur of approbation, it died away without a responsive echo. The entrance of Mdlle. Pierson, however, her radiant beauty set off by an exquisitely becoming costume, was the signal for an ovation which, whether addressed to the actress or her milliner, or both, was unmistakeably sincere; and a few moments sufficing to convince the most fastidious critic that her "ramage" was on a par with her "plumage," the spectators fairly gave themselves up to enjoyment, and applauded with equal zest the witty dialogue of the dramatist, and the graceful piquancy of his popular interpreter.

At the end of the first act, Morisseau slipped out of the box, for the purpose, as he hinted to André, of enlisting in his favour the sympathies of his literary brethren in the foyer; his placeb eing temporarily occupied by M. de Brévannes, one of Madame de Nerval's occasional visitors, glad to escape from the confined thraldom of his stall. After the usual topics of the day had been discussed, and a stray guess or two hazarded by the new-comer whether the authorship of the piece ought to be attributed to Gondinet or to Meilhac.

"By the way, Madame," he said, "you have heard the news about Jozan?"

"Is he married already?" asked the widow, with a sly glance at André.

"Not he, nor likely to be," replied M. de Brévannes; "unless he has more luck in Belgium than he has had in France."

"In Belgium!" exclaimed both ladies simultaneously.

"Ma Foi!" returned the other. "When a man has been, to use a technical expression, executed at the Bourse for non-payment on set

tling day, the chances are that he will be half way to Brussels before night. Au revoir, mesdames," he added, as the tinkling of a bell, announcing the close of the entr'acte, resounded through the house; and took his leave exactly as Morisseau re-entered the box, evidently in a high state of jubilation.

"Çà va bien!" whispered the latter to his friend. "Not one dissentient voice as yet. If the second act goes as well as the first, take my word for it, next Monday's feuilletons will be pleasant reading!"

When a Parisian audience has once been tempted into anything approaching enthusiasm, a reaction is seldom to be dreaded. M. de Talleyrand's maxim that "first impressions are generally the right ones" is too consolatory to be easily abandoned; and few are so entirely deficient in amour propre as willingly to lend a hand towards the demolition of the idol they themselves have set up. In the present case, however, no reversal of the original verdict was needful, or even possible. As the piece progressed, each successive scene was hailed with repeated manifestations of interest and delight; while an ingeniously contrived and totally unsuspected dénouement brought down the curtain amid a tumult of spontaneous applause, overpowering the demonstrations of the claque, and triumphantly ratifying the admission of "Mieux vaut tard que jamais" into the répertoire of the Gymnase.

When the name of M. André Chavarol had been duly proclaimed, according to custom, the eyes of the young author instinctively met those of Madame de Nerval.

"I am *so* happy," she said; and a soft pressure of her hand told him the rest.

Leaving Morisseau to escort the ladies to their carriage, André hastened to the stage-door, and penetrated into the green-room in time to receive the congratulations of the manager, and express his gratitude to the artists who had so valiantly combated in his behalf. Which duty accomplished, we have reason to believe that his presence was considered indispensable both by himself and somebody else at a joyous supper in the Rue de Berlin.

Is it necessary, gentle reader, to indulge in any indiscreet speculations as to the future destinies of our hero? or shall we not rather bid him farewell at a moment when fortune seems at last inclined to vouchsafe him a smile? Such smiles, we all know, are neither frequent nor altogether to be depended upon; but the inconstant goddess may favour us when we least expect it, and who would *then* be disposed to quarrel with the time-honoured saying, "Mieux vaut tard que jamais"?

C. H.

STRONGER THAN DEATH.

LET me open the windows of a long-closed memory, and cool you with the December freshness of a Minnesota blast.

Our Christmas mail had come in. The wood-fire was singing in the immense grate; otherwise, the silence in the room was only broken by the rustling of the paper as we read our letters by the waning light of the afternoon.

My brother passed to me with a smile those bearing my address, dexterously putting uppermost one with a certain handwriting upon it. Justine, his wife, echoed the smile as she looked up. My eyes were dim with joyful emotion, my cheeks brightening. How dear the writer was to me, none could know. The letter concluded thus:

"And when are you coming home, little woman? I have counted the months on a rosary of tears, and yesterday a decade had slipped through my fingers. *Ten months* since we looked on your pale, charming, spirituelle face! '*Months?*' do I say? It seems to me like, rather, ten centuries. I am hungry for a sight of you—for a sound of you, Dorie. There is a rumour of Hubert's coming down to Washington shortly. Does that mean (Heaven grant it!) that you and Justine travel with him? JASPAR."

Hubert was my brother, as I have said, and Justine was his wife. Dear heart! what need to tell who Jaspar was? I smoothed the letter tenderly upon my knee, caressante, as one pats and smooths the hand of a friend. Had I been alone, I should have pressed it to my lips.

"Pale, charming, spirituelle face," indeed! A glance at the glass over the chimney-piece, as I turned to the fire, made me quite laugh at the words. The thin cheeks that I had brought with me from my far-away home had rounded into blooming peaches; the white, waxen complexion had regained its healthy hue; the clear eyes were hollow and shadowy no longer. My ten months in the West had made me a sound woman again, thanks to the care of my brother Hubert and his wife.

Considerably more than a year ago a very serious illness had fallen upon me. It was subdued, and I got better after a fashion; but I could not regain health and strength. The doctors said nothing remained for me but a long and effectual change of air and scene; and I was sent to Hubert and Justine, who had settled here in the West. A good part of Hubert's practice lay around here; though he had to go now and again to the Courts at Washington. A young and

rising lawyer, he would be a man of fame some day. Jaspar's practice lay at home: and this enforced separation had been felt by both of us. But it would soon be over now. Hubert was to go south in March. and would take charge of me home.

I stood over the fire reading my other letters. Hubert had gone into the adjoining room, his library, and was seated at the table, opening the packets that the mail had brought. I drew a chair to the fire, and fell into a reverie. Three months, and I should be at home again! It was not that I was not supremely happy with my brother and his wife; but—where the heart is, there does the body yearn to be.

We had talked the journey over so often, Justine and I! For she was to go down with me on a visit. Both of us were young and fond of change; both of us were eastern-born and had grown home-sick for the sight of a certain far-off city. The intense cold up here this winter was strange to us. Catherine of Russia in her palace of ice seemed to claim all our pity. We ourselves grew lethargic in the bitter, rarefied air. A sense of helplessness would seize us amid the blank snow-fields; the giant drifts frightened us when out sleighing, the very tips of our noses muffled in furs. While storms shook the house we read "Snow-bound," and wondered how Whittier found so much poetry in so stern a prose. To leave all this, and to go to a more genial clime was a prospect full of delight. But, it was not the snow I wanted to quit, but the dear old home I yearned to see, and my father and mother, and all the rest of the dear ones, and—Jaspar. I was picturing the meeting then; I seemed to be amidst them; the letters lying in my lap, a happy smile on my face.

What was that? Some words had dawned indistinctly on my ear through the open door of the other room, and I turned quickly round. Justine was leaning over her husband's shoulder looking, with him, at one of the letters.

"Yes," he said, repeating the words whose substance I had caught. "You see, my dear, there is no help for it. I cannot wait until March: I must start early in January."

"What do you say, Hubert?" I cried, bounding into the library.

"I am called away sooner than I thought for, Dorothy. Must go in January instead of March."

"*Early* in January you said, Hubert."

"Ay. I ought to be away in less than a week from now."

My heart gave a great throb of pleasure. "Oh Hubert, it will be delightful! To wait until March did seem long—to me. We can be quite ready in less than a week; in half the time: can't we, Justine?"

"All right. But now I tell you two young ladies what it is: I am up to my eyes in business, and must trouble you to betake yourselves out of my room. I will have tea brought to me here, Justine."

I stole up to my own chamber with hope so warm in my heart that

it seemed enough to melt the snow on the outer window-sills. All the bleak world grew green and sunny; I could fancy the summer birds were singing in the leafless trees.

Never, never, since I came to them, had I been in such spirits as I was that evening. Justine, on the contrary, was provokingly sober. Her face looked as grave as possible over the tea-table; later, she seemed to have more head for her knitting than for answering me. It was an extra-warm vest she was making for Hubert.

"You are afraid you'll not get that done, Justine. Why, you could finish it in two days if you chose."

"Oh yes, I shall get it done."

"Then why are you so silent—with never a word for me?"

"One of my bad headaches has come on, Dorie. Suppose we have a hand at cribbage?"

That night when I lay in bed, the glow of my fire making the chamber pleasant, I fell to thinking, too happy to sleep. How could Justine take it all so coolly, I wondered, and let a miserable headache trouble her, while I was half delirious with the joy and the expectation. It's true she had her home and her husband here; but she had been wild to go amidst her own people, and ——

My thoughts were interrupted. Justine herself stood in my chamber in her night wrapper, having pushed the door gently open. By the light of the taper she put on the table, I saw the tears in her eyes.

"Dorie, I did not mean to say anything till the morning," she said, "but somehow I cannot go to bed till I have told you."

"What is it?" I asked, with a dart of fear.

"Hubert left me the task of breaking it to you, Dorie. He goes *alone* in January."

I swallowed a sob in my throat. A cry rose to my lips, but I held it in. Oh, the bitter shock of the disappointment!

"Dearest Dorie," said poor Justine, pityingly, "I feel for you deeply. It is hard enough for me; but I have cast my lot deliberately in these western wilds, and I must not complain when things go crossly.

"But those dear home-folks; and—and Jaspar!" I murmured. "O Justine! why can't we go?—why cannot he take us?"

"It is something about the changing of his route. And—and—the cold."

"But I don't care for the cold."

She stooped and kissed me tenderly on the mouth: "God bless you, darling, you have sacrificed yourself I know in staying here so long. Perhaps we may coax Hubert into taking you at all hazards, Dorie."

"And leave *you* behind?"

"You would not wish me to go at the risk of my life, dear?"

I looked at her slight frame and nervous face, and understood her. Travel in that intense cold would be too much for *her*. Now I could

understand what had caused her silence in the evening: she was sorrowing for me. I put my arms around her and drew her down to me. "It will be all right," I said, as bravely as I could; "we will wait together until the spring."

She kissed me again softly, and went out with her taper. The closing of the door left me once more in quiet darkness, for the fire had burnt low. Oh, it was a cruel blow; and I could not lie still and bear it. Arising, I turned the key in the lock, and on my knees fought out my battle by myself. I was so desperately home-sick. I had gone down in fancy out of my ice-tower into the Paradise of blue skies and pleasant places; and walked with my dear ones through familiar scenes. And here was I recaptured by the giant, Circumstance.

I bethought me of the little Mexican bird that feeds on dew and honey. Lively and sportive in the summer hours, it seemingly dies when winter comes; and hangs suspended from a tree-branch, a torpid, tiny mass. But with the first flowers of the spring, it bursts its death like sleep, and wings its flight around the garden, pouring forth ripples of silver song. Happy bird, I thought to myself that winter night, when will the spring-time of *my* deliverance come?

If the fire had not burned quite out and the bitter cold attacked me, I think I should have knelt there all night. So I had to creep into bed again; and in time I fell asleep. But, even then, a haunting trouble seemed to pursue me. I dreamed that Jaspar was ill; dying. That he held out his pale hands, and cried aloud for me. I thought that I had but to cross a field to reach him, when suddenly a terrible noise was heard, the solid earth between us slid into a black gulf—and I saw my friend, my dear dear friend, no more. The anguish awoke me.

My brother departed alone. I had grown pretty well reconciled then, for it was fully decided that arrangements should be made for my departure in the spring. Hubert started on a Friday. It was the 5th of January. I have good reason to remember that date. The night he left us, Justine was ill. She was subject to most violent headaches; the pain of them almost unbearable; and the worry of getting her husband off and the sting of parting, brought on one. I stayed by her bedside till nearly midnight, bathing her forehead.

When I went to my own room I was tired, but singularly wide-awake. In saying that, I mean that I was not sleepy. As yet, there was no sleep in my eyes. I threw a fresh log upon the fire, and sat down in my low chair to read a chapter, as was my custom. And what I am now going to relate is open to you to believe or doubt, as you will. I can only say that it happened. I can only assert that I was under no hallucination of mind, no affection of the nerves. In excellent health, I was sound in mind as in body.

The clock struck twelve as I began to read. The room was light, and warm, and quiet: for both fire and lamp burned clearly. My

Bible; it was one Jaspar had given me; opened of itself at the fourth chapter of Thessalonians, and my eyes fell on these verses:

"Brethren, we would not have you ignorant concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore, comfort one another with these words."

After I had read thus far, a strange sensation came over me. A numbness and stagnation of the blood seized me. I seemed for a short space to have gone out of the body—I knew not where. Then a chill wind, earthy in its smell as if it blew from an open grave, passed between me and the glowing fire; and in that moment, *I distinctly saw Jaspar before me!*

He was standing upright, rigid, and with closed eyes. Pale he was, with the pallor of what looked like recent death? He was dressed in his grave-clothes, and his white hands were folded on his breast in an attitude of most beseeching supplication. A soft phosphorescent light appeared to surround him. Every turn of his features, every lock of his damp, curling hair was plainly visible. His face was sad, but full of resignation.

I think I must have fainted, for there followed a long blank. At a late hour the next morning they found me on the bed: but I had not the faintest recollection as to how I got there. My evening dress was still on; Jaspar's Bible lay open on the ground.

Nervous, trembling, I told Justine what I had seen. Blithe as a bird laughed out she, treating my fears with scorn. But for the dreadful recollection and my inward conviction, I might have thought the whole thing what she called it—a vision of a troubled sleep.

"You were freezing over me and my headache," she said buoyantly. "You threw yourself on the bed just as you were, without undressing; as a matter of course you were uncomfortable and dreamed bad dreams. I'll venture to say you were lying upon your back. What could you expect in that case but the nightmare?"

"Don't, Justine. I tell you I saw it."

"Oh, come now, that *must* be nonsense, you know, Dorie. Put yourself to rights, and come down to breakfast; they are keeping your chocolate hot. It is a delightful day," she continued brightly, "warmer than yesterday. We will go out by-and-bye, and see the Verners."

I breakfasted with an inexpressible feeling of sadness. The delicious chocolate failed to exhilarate me. Later we started for our ride; but, though the dashing of the sleigh through the crisp sunny morning was bracing, it could not drive the cobwebs from my brain, the depression from my spirits. It was one of the fairest days of that long northern winter. The snow was dazzlingly pure, and sparkled like crystals: the smoke from the wayside chimneys curled straight to the clouds, like airy spiral staircases. Vermillion was but three miles off, and the Verners' beautiful house was just outside the town. Ourselves and they were on terms of great intimacy.

We found Mrs. Verner by the fire in the sitting-room. She was a tall, lithe woman, with strongly-marked features and large black eyes full of latent force. French and Spanish blood mingled in her veins: and the story of her lineage was written on her face.

She had conceived a passionate fondness for me; which at times found vent in expressions most extravagant. Justine was very partial to her. Before my arrival at my brother's home, she had made Mrs. Verner her sole friend and confidante. And the gossips at Vermillion were wont to say, so much were the two families together, that we made the Verners' mansion our town residence, and that they found their country seat at our house in the wilds. As a matter of course, we had no secrets from one another. As a matter of course, also, Justine—dear, loquacious sister—was scarcely divested of her wraps that winter morning, before she unbosomed herself to Mrs. Verner.

With her feet on the shining fender, rocking to and fro in the easiest of easy chairs, she told the story of Hubert's departure, and of my "ugly dream." For that was what she persisted in calling it.

As to Hubert's departure, it was no news. But when Justine went on to tell of the "dream," Mrs. Verner looked at me with those great eyes ablaze, much excited.

"And you believe it was an apparition?" she asked me quickly.

I had not spoken. In fact, I felt decidedly averse to having the matter canvassed.

She rose up, hot and vehement. "It was a dream," she said forcibly, and with gestures; "only a bad dream. There are no such things as apparitions in these days. The dead are dead. They are gone; they return no more."

"I am sorry I cannot agree with you," I said, with dreary calmness. "This thing was too real. I was not asleep. I saw Jasp—I saw my friend as plainly last night as I now see you."

And I broke off, shuddering at the remembrance, and hid my face in my hands.

"Don't be shy, my dear," she said. "I know who 'Jaspar' is. But this was not he. It was nothing but a nasty dream."

I did not answer.

"Let me convince you," she resumed, leaning towards me with some strong feeling of agitation in her face. "Let me tell you *my* story. Verner will not be home for an hour yet," she rapidly continued, glancing at her little jewelled watch: and I may as well here observe that I never heard her call her husband by his Christian name; always Verner, or Mr. Verner. "I do not care to mention this matter before him, for he is jealous as a Moor. Men are such fools. Bah!" —with an expressive gesture of contempt—"to be jealous of *the dead!* Was there ever such folly, Dorie?"

"But what is it that you have to tell me?"

"Listen. I was tenderly beloved by a young Spaniard. It was in my early girlhood. A handsome cavalier, with pensive eyes, and the grave, courteous ways of the real hidalgo. Mark you; I do not say that his love was returned. I was interested in him; there was a great deal of sentiment between us, and we were both young and overflowing with romance. If he had lived—but I am anticipating. One moonlight night, as we paused in parting near the gate of my father's garden, I was feigning to doubt the sincerity of his affection. I remember I plucked a spray of roses and shook it till the scarlet petals fell upon the grass at our feet, likening them, as they fluttered away, to the love that glows for a short season, only to wither and crumble at the touch of time."

"Yes, please go on."

"He took my hand in his, and with an intense look and a fervour I shall never forget, spoke these solemn words: 'Carmita, I promise you now, I swear to you by the blue heavens above us, that if I should die before you, I will come to you after death and assure you of my fidelity. That will prove it to you. True love is stronger than death. Will you do the same for me, my darling?' Carried away by the wild romance of the hour, surrounded by the dewy darkness, breathing the delicious odour of the orange-trees, and with the thought of actual death as far from me as was the blue sky he called to witness his oath, I repeated the unholy words."

Slightly shuddering, she put one hand over the other, and dropped her voice to a dread tone.

"That night, riding home, his horse stumbled and threw him. His neck was broken; death was instantaneous. I never saw him again in life—" she paused, and a curious emotion passed over her face before she added—"or in death. And that was twenty years ago."

"Are you convinced, Dorie?" asked Justine, rising to go.

I shook my head. What had this tale to do with what I had seen? Mrs. Verner laid her thin, muscular hand impressively on mine.

"It is all imagination, child," she said, slowly. "If spirits could manifest themselves after death to the living, that of Angelo Munez would have shown itself to me."

"What a strange woman she seems to be!" I exclaimed to Justine, when we were in the sleigh.

"I always thought her that. But I like her. As to being strange—I'm sure, Dorie, she could retort the compliment on you; after hearing you deliberately confess to having seen a 'vision.' The air seems keener. Don't put your face out."

The next day, Sunday, Mr. and Mrs. Verner came over to see us after early afternoon service. He had a fit of indigestion upon him, to which he was subject, and at those times was full of temper and caprice. This afternoon he refused to stay for tea.

Justine was one of the most hospitable of women, playing the hostess with delightful courtesy. We could both see that Mrs. Verner needed no pressing to remain; but her husband was inexorable. It was a dull day; the sky leaden with the promise of more snow. Mr. Verner prophesied a stormy night, and told his wife it was useless to remove her bonnet. They must start for Vermillion almost directly, he urged, as he had no fancy for a three-miles' ride through the snow on a black night. It was useless for Justine to plead that the fallen snow gave a light of its own; that we had frequently quitted Vermillion at ten o'clock on just such a night, and found our way home in perfect safety. Our most persuasive arguments could only prolong their visit till the early twilight began to fall: and with a cup of tea, taken as they were starting, they left us.

Before noon the next day, Justine and I were rather startled by Mrs. Verner's sudden appearance. She came into the parlour unannounced, looking wild. The storm her husband predicted had come on, lasted all night, was lasting still; and Mrs. Verner's black hair was powdered with snow, as if for a court coiffure. She had come out to us alone in her sleigh, driving herself, she said, as we removed her wraps. This she had never done before, albeit she had the nerve of a man. But, once her fur gauntlets were off, her hands trembled like an aspen; and, in spite of the deep bloom the wind had given her, she was haggard and hollow-eyed as a person who had not slept.

After she drank the wine Justine brought her, she stood erect and made a passionate gesture, crossing her arms before her eyes.

"God has punished me for my presumption!"

Naturally this startled us both. And especially so when she suddenly crouched down at my feet, shaking with a strange terror and lifting her voice in a half whisper.

"In going home last evening Angelo Munez came to me."

Justine looked at me wonderingly. The same suspicion had occurred to both of us. What with this poor woman's strange manner and stranger words, we feared she had lost her senses.

"I am not out of my mind," she quickly cried. "I almost wish I were. Last evening I went home, as you know, alone with Verner. The sky

was like lead: not a star to be seen. Before we had gone half a mile the night fell suddenly, like the dropping of a black curtain. But I rejoiced in the darkness, for it hid my sullen face: I was angry because he would not stay with you; I can't bear to be crossed in trifles. I leaned against his breast; not from choice, but to shield my face from the wind, which cut like a sword. I really wanted to stay and spend the evening with you here; and he was so ugly over it, so perverse. I resented the injustice: I could almost have struck him. Then, in the high tide of my passion, I thought of Angelo. Our conversation of the previous day had brought him back to me; with the memory of his kindness, of his devotion, of his unwearying patience with my whims. '*He* would not have done this,' I panted inwardly; 'he would not have denied me the petty pleasure of a few hours in the society of my best friends; he loved me, purely, unselfishly, loved me unto death. Yes,' I repeated to my own heart, 'and he said he would return to me after death to assure me of his fidelity: to prove his love. He said he would: but he never did.'"

From sheer agitation Mrs. Verner's voice broke down. Justine would have interposed, but she raised her hand solemnly.

"As I thought those thoughts, as I mentally spoke those words, I felt upon my left shoulder a pressure as of a mighty hand; and a great light flowed over me as from a source behind and above me! The rays of that light seemed to pierce my sinking heart like arrows. Some supernatural presence was pressing upon me. I cowered closer to my husband. I dared not turn or lift my eyes, out of which the hot tears were gushing, lest I should see over my shoulder the shape whence flowed that awful light. My soul was on my lips, yet I made no sound. Verner also was silent as the dead; I might almost have doubted if he saw the strange illumination, but that he dashed on so swiftly. The horse shook as with an ague. And when we had passed out of that ghastly radiance Mr. Verner spoke: 'What was that, Carmita?' *But he did not look back at it;* and his face was blanched. When a man, in driving, passes anything that particularly attracts his attention, he instinctively looks back at it. 'Did you see that light?' he went on; 'it must have been a meteor.' I laughed."

Justine came over and laid her hands upon the agitated woman's, hoping to soothe her. Mrs. Verner, who was staring at me with an absorbed, inexplicable gaze, drew her hands away.

"See how I tremble now at telling it!" she cried, holding up those shaking hands. "Yet, would you believe it, I was able to laugh at it in mockery, telling my husband he was afraid of the darkness of the night. 'We are the favourites of Heaven,' I said, with strange sarcasm; 'this icy slope by the dell is the only dangerous bit of road between this and Vermillion; and lo! some good genii has sent us pyrotechnics.'"

Her mocking spirit grated on me and on Justine.

"He took it for granted, I suppose, that I had not seen the light. But I know he did not like it; I know he felt superstitious at the time. He is a superstitious man by nature, and he has not been well of late. Any way, he was silent and grumpy all the night after."

"Don't go," I said, earnestly, as Mrs. Verner began to gather up her sables and gloves. "You are terribly unnerved. Stay with us and rest until after our early dinner."

She turned and gave me again that sad, piercing glance. Her expressive eyes overflowed with pity and tenderness.

"I *must* go," she answered, slowly. "When I leave here, I go to seek the French priest at Inver Grove. He must offer a mass tomorrow for poor Angelo's soul. Come with me, Dorie, my comforter. Will you not lend her to me, Justine? There is room in the sleigh, and I will bring her back safe in a few hours."

Of course my sister gave her assent. There was no reason why she should not. The snow had now ceased to fall; and her sympathy for the woman was beyond words. I made ready.

Away from Justine's eyes, under cover of the outer porch, Mrs. Verner's arm stole round my waist. A most passionate embrace was followed by a sudden kiss, and a low vehement cry. "May God comfort you, Dorie, as you have comforted me!"

She so often made these wild speeches, and had, as I have said, so vehement a way of showing fondness, that I thought nothing of this.

Once in the sleigh, buried in buffalo robes, and with the bells tinkling blithely, we went on to the French church, not exchanging a word. Mrs. Verner, it will be readily understood, was a Roman Catholic. Close to it, we met the priest: a white-haired old missionary with a benevolent face. He was setting off hurriedly to minister to some one sick. Mrs. Verner, alighting from the sleigh, took him aside to tell her errand. While they talked, I strolled absently into the open church. I heard the priest go away. I heard Mrs. Verner coming swiftly up the aisle behind me.

She caught me in her strong arms and drew me down beside her on my knees. "This is the house of God," she whispered rapidly, "this is His special abiding-place. I have brought you here, to-day, Dorie, for a solemn purpose."

I stared in her face in mingled surprise and fear. She was deadly white; her eyes sparkled like stars. Again the thought came to me—this woman must be mad!

Her hand went to the corsage of her dress. Was she going to kill me? Had she a dagger or a pistol hidden there? No, poor woman sensational though her manners were, she was actuated by true pity, genuine love. The tears ran in showers down her cheeks as she drew out a slip of paper, and held it before my eyes.

Ah! woe is me, woe is me! a dagger-stroke or a pistol-shot would

have been less cruel. It was a telegram. A telegram sent from my distant home to Hubert's friends, the Verners, that they might break the news to me. On my knees before the sacred altar I read it.

"*Jaspar died at midnight on Friday, January the 5th. Only a week ill. His last words were: 'The way is long and dark, but I must go to-night to see my little Dorie.'*" E. C. D.

LIGHT IN DARKNESS.

NIGHT dons her darkest robe wherein to fly
From the fair dawn,
Whose coming bids the shadows fade and die.
Lo! they are gone!
While she triumphant mounts the eastern sky
And glowing day draws on.

So, when the storm is at its fiercest height,
Often a calm,
Like the grey dawn that banishes the night,
Brings sudden balm;
The thunders cease, the warring clouds take flight
Peace bears away the palm.

The heaviest burden wins at last relief.
You then, who weep,
Bethink you; children sobbing out their grief,
Wearied will sleep;
And to the soul, after life's passion brief,
Comes a repose more deep.

Therefore, take comfort, troubled heart of mine.
O weary heart!
The calm that follows strife shall yet be thine,
To soothe the smart;
For thee the dawn will come, the sun will shine,
And bitter grief depart.

S. E. G.

M. ELLEN EDWARDS. J. SWAIN.

LOOKING AT THE WILL.

THE ARGOSY.

MARCH, 1876.

EDINA.

By Mrs. HENRY WOOD, Author of "East Lynne."

CHAPTER VII.

ROSE-COLOURED DREAMS.

THE sweet spring sunshine lay upon Trennach, and upon Dr. Raynor's surgery. Francis Raynor stood in it, softly whistling. Two sovereigns lay on the square table, amidst the small scales and the drugs and the bottles, and he was looking down upon them in some doubt. He wanted to convey this money anonymously to a certain destination, and he hardly knew how to accomplish it. Sovereigns were not at all plentiful with Frank; but he would, in his open-heartedness, have given away the last he possessed, and cast no regret after it.

"I know!" he suddenly cried, taking up a sheet of white paper. "I'll pack them up in an envelope and direct it to her, and get Gale the postman to deliver it on his round. Dame Bell is unsuspicious as the day, and will think the money is sent by Rosaline—as the last was. As to Gale?—oh, he is ready to do anything for me and Uncle Hugh, for doctoring his children for nothing. It's a shame he is paid so badly, poor fellow!"

Several weeks had gone on since the disappearance of Josiah Bell, and it was now close upon May. Bell had never returned: nothing could be heard of him. Mrs. Bell knew not what to make of it: she was a calm-natured, unemotional woman, and she took the loss more easily than some wives might have taken it. Bell was missing: she could make neither more nor less of it than that: he might come back sometime, and she believed he *would*: meanwhile she tried to do the best she could without him. In losing him, she had lost the benefit of his good wages, and they had been the home's chief support. She possessed

a very small income of her own, which she received quarterly—and this had enabled them to live in a superior way to most of the other miners—but this was not sufficient to keep her of itself. A managing, practical woman, Mrs. Bell had at once looked out for some way of helping herself in the dilemma, and found it. She took in two of the unmarried miners to lodge, one of them being Andrew Float, and she began to knit worsted stockings for sale. "I shall get along till Bell returns," was her cheerful remark to the community.

Rosaline was at Falmouth—and meant to remain there. She wrote word that she was helping her aunt with her millinery business, was already a good hand at it, and received wages, which she intended to transmit to her mother. The first instalment—it was not much—had already come. Frank Raynor had just called Dame Bell unsuspicious as the day. She was so. But, one curious fact, in spite of the non-tendency to suspicion, was beginning to strike her: that in all the letters written by Rosaline, she had never once mentioned her father's name, or inquired whether he was found.

Frank Raynor, elastic Frank, had recovered his spirits. It was perhaps impossible that one of his light nature and sanguine temperament should long retain the impression left by the dreadful calamity of that fatal March night. Whatever the precise details of the occurrence had been, he had managed to shake off outwardly the weight they had thrown upon him, and in manner was himself again.

Perhaps one thing, that helped him very considerably to do this, was his changed opinion as to the amount of knowledge possessed by Blase Pellet. At first he had feared the man; feared what evil he might bring. But, as the days and the weeks had gone on, and Blase Pellet did not speak, or give any hint to Trennach that he had aught in his power to betray, Frank grew to think that he really possessed it not; that though the man might vaguely suspect something wrong had occurred that night, he had not witnessed it, and was not actually cognisant of it. Therefore Frank Raynor had become in a measure his own light and genial self again. None could more bitterly regret the night's doings than he did: but his elastic temperament could throw off its signs: ay, and often its recollection.

The thing that troubled him a little was Mrs. Bell's position. It was through him she had been deprived of the chief means which had kept her home: therefore it was only just, as he looked upon it, that he should help her. Even with the profits from the two lodgers and the stockings, and with what Rosaline would be enabled to send, her weekly income would be very much smaller than it used to be. Frank wished with his whole heart that he could settle some money upon her, or make her a weekly allowance; but he was not rich enough for it. He would, however, help her a little now and again in secret—as much as he was able—and hence the destination of the two sovereigns.

In secret. It would not do to let her or anyone else know the money came from him, lest the question might be asked, What claim has she upon you that you should send it? To answer that truthfully would be singularly inconvenient.

Trennach in general could of course make no more of the disappearance of Bell than his wife made. It was simply not to be understood. Many and many an hour's discussion took place over it at the Golden Shaft, to the accompaniment of pipes and beer; many a theory was started. The man might be here, or he might be there; he might have strolled this way, or wandered that—but it all ended as it began: Bell was missing, and none of them could divine the cause. And the Seven Whistlers, that he heard on the Sunday night, or thought he heard, had certainly left no damage behind them for the miners. The men might just as well have been at work those three days, for all the accident that had occurred in the mines. Perhaps better.

Seated at the window of what was called the pink drawing-room at the Mount, from the colour of its walls, were Mrs. St. Clare and her daughter Lydia. The large window, shaded by its lace curtains, stood open to the warm, bright day. Upon the lawn was Margaret in her white dress, flitting from flower to flower, gay as the early butterflies that sported in the sunshine. Lydia, a peculiar expression on her discontented face, watched her sister's movements.

Frank Raynor had just gone out from his daily visit, carrying with him an invitation to dine with them in the evening. Lydia was really better; she no more wanted the attendance of a doctor than her sister wanted it: but she was eaten up with ennui still, and the daily, or nearly daily, coming of Frank Raynor was the most welcome episode in her present life. She had learned to look for him: perhaps had learned in a very slight degree to *like* him: at any rate his presence was ever welcome. Not that Lydia would have suffered herself to entertain any serious thoughts of the young surgeon—because he was a surgeon, and therefore far beneath her notice in that way—but she did recognize the fascination of his companionship, and enjoyed it. Latterly, however, an idea had dawned upon her that somebody else enjoyed it also—her sister—and the suspicion was extremely unwelcome. Lydia was of an intensely jealous disposition. She would not for all the world have condescended to look upon Frank Raynor as a lover, but her jealousy was rising up, now that she suspected Daisy might be doing so, somewhat after the fashion of the dog-in-the-manger. That little chit, Daisy, too, whom she looked upon as a child!—there was some difference, she hoped, between nineteen and her own more experienced age of five-and-twenty! She was fond of Daisy, but had not the least intention of being rivalled by her; and perhaps for the little one's own sake, it might be as well to speak.

As Frank went out, he crossed Daisy's path on the lawn. They

turned away side by side, walking slowly, talking apparently of the flowers; lingering over them, bending to inhale their sweet perfume. Mrs. St. Clare, a new magazine and a paper-knife in her hand—for she did make a pretence of reading now and then, though it was as much a penance as a pleasure—glanced up indifferently at them once, and then glanced down again at her book. But Lydia, watching more observantly, saw signs and wonders: the earnest, speaking gaze of Frank's blue eyes as they looked into Daisy's; the shy droop in hers; and the clinging pressure of the hands in farewell. He went on his way; and Daisy, detecting in that moment her sister's sharp glance from the window, made herself at once very busy with the beds and the flowers, as if they were her only thought in life.

"Mamma!"

The tone was so sharp a one that Mrs. St. Clare lifted her head in surprise. Lydia's voice was usually as supinely listless as her own.

"What is it, Lydia?"

"Don't you think that Daisy wants a little looking after?"

"In what way?"

"Of course I may be mistaken in my suspicions. But I think I am not. I will assume that I am not."

"Well, Lydia?"

"She and Mr. Raynor are flirting desperately."

Mrs. St. Clare made no reply whatever. Her eyes, fixed on Lydia's inquiringly, kept their gaze for a moment or so, and then fell on the magazine's pages again. Lydia felt a little astonished: was this indignation or indifference?

"Did you understand me, mamma?"

"Perfectly, my dear."

"Then—I really do not comprehend you. Don't you consider that Daisy must be restrained?"

"If I see Daisy do anything that I much disapprove, I shall be sure to restrain her."

"Have you not noticed, yourself, that they are flirting?"

"I suppose they are. Something of the kind."

"But *surely*, mamma, you cannot approve of Mr. Raynor! Suppose a serious attachment came of it, you could not suffer her to marry him!"

Mrs. St. Clare turned her book upside down upon her knee, and spoke in the equable manner that characterised her, folding her arms idly in the light morning scarf she wore.

"It never occurred to me, Lydia, until one day, a week or two ago, that any possibility could arise of what you are mentioning. Mr. Raynor's visits here are professional ones. Even when he comes by invitation to dinner, I consider them as partaking of that nature:—to look upon them in any other light never entered my mind. On this

day, however, I saw something that, figuratively speaking, opened my eyes."

"What was it?" asked Lydia.

"It occurred on the day that the Faulkners were to have come to us, and did not. Mr. Raynor dined here in the evening. After dinner I dropped into a doze; there, on the sofa"—pointing to the other end of the room. "When I awoke it was quite dusk; not dark; and Mr. Raynor and Daisy were standing together at this open window; standing very close indeed to each other. Daisy was leaning against him, in fact; and he, I think, had one of her hands in his. You were not in the room."

"It was the evening I had so bad a headache, through vexation at those stupid people not coming!" cried Lydia, angrily. "I had gone upstairs, I suppose, to take my drops. But what did you do, mamma? Order Mr. Raynor from the house?"

"No. Had I acted on my first impulse, I might have done that, Lydia. But some instinct warned me to take time for consideration. I did so. I sat quite still, my head down on the cushion as before, they of course supposing me to be still asleep, and I ran the matter rapidly over in my mind. The decision I came to was, not to speak hastily; not *then;* to take, at any rate, the night for further reflection: so I coughed to let them know I was awake, and said nothing."

"Well?" cried Lydia, impatiently.

"I went over the affair again at night with myself, looking at it from all points, weighing its merits and its demerits, and trying to balance them, one against the other," pursued Mrs. St. Clare. "The result I came to was this, Lydia: to let the matter take its course."

Lydia opened her eyes very widely. "What! to let—to let her marry him?"

"Perhaps. But you jump to conclusions too rapidly, Lydia."

"Why, he is only a common medical practitioner!"

"*There* of course lies the objection. But he is not a 'common' practitioner, Lydia. If he were, do you suppose I should invite him here as I do, and make much of him? He is a gentleman, and the son of a gentleman. In point of fact," added Mrs. St. Clare, in a lower tone, as if the acknowledgment might only be given in a whisper, "our branch of the St. Clare family is little, if any, better than are the Raynors ——"

"Mamma, how can you say so?" burst forth Lydia. "It is not true. And the Raynors have always been as poor as church mice."

"And—I was going to say," went on Mrs. St. Clare with calm equanimity—"he is the heir to Eagles' Nest."

Lydia sat back in her chair, a scowl on her brow. She could not contradict that.

"In most cases of this kind there are advantages and disadvantages," quietly spoke Mrs. St. Clare, "and I tried, as I tell you, to put the one against the other, and see which was the weightiest. On the one hand, there is his profession, and his want of high connections; on the other, there is Eagles' Nest, and there are his own personal attractions. You are looking very cross, Lydia. You think, I see, that Daisy might do better."

"Of course she might."

"She might, or she might not," spoke Mrs. St. Clare, impressively. "Marriage used to be called a lottery: but it is a lottery that seems to be getting as scarce now as the real lotteries that the old governments put down. For one girl that marries, half a dozen do not. Is it so, or is it not, Lydia? And it appears to me that the more eligible girls, those who are most worthy to be chosen and who would make the best wives, are generally those who are left. Have you been chosen yet?—forgive me for speaking plainly. No. Yet you have been *waiting* to be chosen—just as other girls wait—for these six or seven years. Daisy may wait in the same manner; wait for ever. We must sacrifice some prejudices in these non-marrying days, Lydia, if we are to get our daughters off at all. If an offer comes, though it may be one that in the old times of pick and choose would have been summarily rejected, it is well to *consider* it in these. And so, you see, my dear, why I am letting matters take their course in regard to Daisy and Mr. Raynor."

"*He* may mean nothing," debated Lydia.

"Neither of them may mean anything, if it comes to that," said Mrs. St. Clare, relapsing into her idly indifferent manner. "It may be just a little flirtation—your own word just now—on both sides; pour faire passer le temps."

"And if Daisy loses her heart to him, and nothing comes of it? You have called him attractive yourself."

"Highly attractive," composedly assented Mrs. St. Clare. "As to the rest, it would be no very great calamity that I know of. When once a girl has had a little love affair in early life, and has got over it, she is always the more tractable in regard to eligible offers, should they drop in. No, Lydia, all things considered—and I have well considered them—it is better not to interfere. The matter shall be left to take its course."

"Well, I must say, Daisy ought not to be allowed to drift into love with a rubbishing assistant-surgeon."

"She has already drifted into it, unless I am mistaken," said Mrs. St. Clare, significantly; "has been down deep in it for some time past. My eyes were not opened quickly enough; but since they did open, they have been tolerably observant, Lydia. Why—do you suppose I should wink at their being so much together, unless I intended the matter to go on? Don't they stroll out alone by moonlight and

twilight, in goodness knows what shady walks of the garden, talking sentiment, and looking at the stars and bending over the same flower? Twice that has happened, Lydia, since I have been on the watch: how many times it has happened before, I can't pretend to tell."

Lydia remained silent. It was all true. Where had her own eyes been? Daisy would walk out through the open French window—she remembered it now—and he would stroll out after her: while Mrs. St. Clare would be in her after-dinner doze, and she (Lydia) lying back in her chair with the chest-ache, or upstairs taking her drops. Yes, it was all true. And what an idiot she had been not to see it—not to suspect!

"We cannot have everything; we must, as I say, make sacrifices," resumed Mrs. St. Clare. "I could have wished that Mr. Raynor was not in the medical profession, especially in the lower branch of it. Of course at present he can only be regarded as entirely unsuitable for Daisy: but that will be altered when the Major comes into Eagles' Nest. Frank will then no doubt quit the profession, and ——"

"The singular thing to me is, that he should ever have entered it," interrupted Lydia. "Fancy the heir to Eagles' Nest making himself into a rubbishing apothecary! It is perfectly incongruous."

"It seems so," said Mrs. St. Clare. "I conclude there must have been some particular motive for it. Perhaps the Major thought it well to give him some profession, and when he had acquired it sent him to this remote place to keep him out of mischief. It will be all right, Lydia, when they come into Eagles' Nest. The Major will of course make Frank a suitable allowance as his heir and successor. The Major is already getting in years: Frank will soon come in."

"As to that old Mrs. Atkinson, she must intend to live to be a hundred," remarked Lydia, tartly. "She ought to give up Eagles' Nest to the Major and live elsewhere. If it is the beautiful place that people say, she might be generous enough to let somebody else have a little benefit out of it."

Mrs. St. Clare laughed. "Old people are selfish, Lydia: they prefer their own ease to other people's. I daresay we shall be the same if we live."

From this conversation, it will be gathered that the check thrown upon Frank Raynor's pleasant intercourse with Margaret St. Clare by the unknown calamity (unknown to the world) that had so mysteriously and suddenly happened, had been but transitory. For a week or two afterwards, Frank had paid none but strictly professional visits to the Mount; had just been courteous to its inmates, Daisy included, as a professional man, and no more. He had not danced with Daisy on her birthday; he had not given her any more tender glances, or exchanged a confidential word with her. But, as the first horror of the occurrence began to lose its hold upon his mind, and his temperament

recovered its elasticity, and his sanguine spirits resumed their sway, his lightness and his love returned to him. He was more with Daisy than ever; he *sought* opportunities to be with her now: formerly they had only come in the course of things. And so they were living in an enchanted dream, whose rose-coloured hues seemed as if they could only have come direct from Eden.

And Frank Raynor, never famous for foresight or forethought at the best of times, fell into the belief that Mrs. St. Clare approved of him as a future aspirant for her daughter's hand, and tacitly encouraged their love. That she must see they were intimate with an especial intimacy, and very much together, he knew, and in his sanguine way he drew deductions accordingly. In this he was partly right, as the reader has learnt; but it never entered into his incautious head to suppose that Mrs. St. Clare was counting upon his coming in for future wealth and greatness.

They stood once more together on this same evening, he and Daisy, gazing at the remains of the gorgeous sunset. Dinner over, Daisy had strolled out as usual into the garden; he following her in a minute or two,without leaving excuse or apology behind him. In his assumption of Mrs. St. Clare's tacit encouragement, he believed excuse to be no longer necessary. Clouds of purple and crimson flecked with gold crowded the west; lighting up Daisy's face, as they stood side by side leaning on the low iron gate, with a hue as rosy as the dream they were living in.

"I should like to see the sunsets of Italy," observed Margaret. "It is said they are very beautiful."

"So should I," promptly replied Frank. "Perhaps sometime we may see them together."

Her face took a brighter tint, though there was nothing in the sky to cause it. He passed his hand along the gate, until it rested on hers.

"Mamma talks of going abroad this summer. I do not know whether it will be to Italy."

"I hope she will not take you!"

"It is Lydia's fault. She says this place tires her. And possibly," added Daisy with a sigh, "when once we get abroad, we shall stay there."

"But, my darling, you know that must not be. I could not spare you. Why, Daisy, how could we live apart?"

Her hand, clasped tenderly, lay in his. Her whole frame thrilled as the hand rested there.

"Shall you always stay on at Trennach?" she questioned, in a low tone.

"Stay on at Trennach!" he repeated, in surprise. "I! Why, Daisy, I hope to be very, very soon away from it. I came to my uncle two

years ago, of my own accord, to gain experience. Nothing teaches you that like the drudgery of a general practice: and I was not one of those self-sufficient young students who set up after hospital practice with M.D. on their door-plate, and believe themselves qualified to cure the world. It is kill or cure, haphazard, with some of them."

"And—when you leave Trennach?" she asked, her clear eyes, clear this evening as any amber, gazing out afar as if she would fain see into the future.

"Oh, it will be all right when I leave Trennach; I shall get along well," returned Frank, in his light, sanguine fashion. "I—I don't care to praise myself, Daisy, but I am clever in my profession; and a clever man must make his way in it. Perhaps I should purchase a share in a West-End practice in town; or else set up for myself in that desirable quarter."

The bright hope of anticipation lighted Daisy's beautiful eyes. Frank changed his tone to one of the sweetest melody. At least it sounded so to *her* ear.

"And with one gentle Spirit at my hearth to cheer and guide me, the world will be to me as a long day in Paradise. My best and dearest! you know what Spirit it is that I covet. Will she say me nay?"

She did not say anything just now; but the trembling fingers, lying in his hand, entwined themselves confidingly within his.

"I know you will get on," she murmured. "You will be great sometime."

"Of course I shall, Daisy. And keep carriages and horses for my darling wife; and the Queen will knight me when I have gained name and fame; and—and we shall be happier than the live-long day."

The bright colours in the sky had faded, leaving the grey twilight in their stead. Before them lay the sloping landscape, not a living soul to be seen on it; immediately behind them was the grove of laurels, shutting them out from view. In this favourable isolation, Frank passed his arm around Daisy's waist, and drew her face to his breast.

"Nothing shall ever separate us, Daisy. Nothing in this world."

"Nothing," she murmured, speaking between his passionate kisses. "I will be yours always and for ever."

"And there will be no trouble," remarked he, in sanguine impulse, as they turned reluctantly away from the gate to regain the house. "I mean no opposition. I am my own master, Daisy, accountable to none; and your mother has seen our love and sanctions it."

"Oh, do you think she does sanction it?" exclaimed Daisy, drawing a deep breath.

"Why, of course she does," replied Frank, speaking in accordance with his assured belief. "Would Mrs. St. Clare let us linger out together, evening after evening, if she did not see and sanction it?

No, there will be neither trouble nor impediment. Life lies before us, Daisy, fair as a happy valley."

The tea waited on the table when they went in. Mrs. St. Clare was sleeping still; Lydia looked very cross. Frank glanced at his watch, as if doubting whether he could stay longer.

Daisy's pretty hands, the deep lace, meant to shade them, falling back, began to busy themselves with the tea-cups. It awoke Mrs. St. Clare. She drew her chair at once to the tea-table. Frank pushed Lydia's light couch towards it.

"We were speaking to-day of Eagles' Nest," observed Mrs. St. Clare —and she really did not introduce the subject with any ulterior view; simply as something to talk of. "It is a very nice place, is it not?"

"Very—by all accounts," replied Frank. "I have not seen it."

"Indeed! Is not that strange?"

"My Aunt Atkinson has never invited me there. None of us have been invited, except the Major. And he has not been there for several years."

"How is that? Major Raynor is the next heir."

"Well, I scarcely know how it is. He and Mrs. Atkinson are not very good friends. There was some quarrel, I fancy."

"Mrs. Atkinson must be very old."

"About seventy-four, I believe."

"Not more than that! I thought she was eighty."

"I was saying to-day," put in Lydia, "that those old people ought to give up their estates to the heir. It is unreasonable to keep Major Raynor so long out of his own."

Frank smiled. "He would be very glad if she did, I daresay, Miss St. Clare: but I don't know about the justice of it. Elderly people, as a rule, cling to their homes. I once knew an old lady, who was unexpectedly called upon to give up her home, in which she had lived for very many years, and it killed her. Before the day for turning out came, she was dead."

"At any rate, *you* will not be kept out of it so long when it comes to your turn, Mr. Raynor," remarked Mrs. St. Clare: "for I suppose the Major is nearly as old as Mrs. Atkinson."

Frank's honest blue eyes went straight into those of the speaker, with a questioning glance.

"I beg your pardon: kept out of what?"

"Of Eagles' Nest."

His whole face lighted up with amusement at the mistake she was making.

"I shall never come into Eagles' Nest, Mrs. St. Clare."

"Never come into Eagles' Nest! But the Major comes into it."

"The Major does. But——"

And you are his eldest son."

Frank laughed outright. Freely and candidly he answered—with never a thought of reserve.

"My dear lady, I am not Major Raynor's son, at all. His eldest son is my cousin Charley. It is he who will succeed to Eagles' Nest."

Mrs. St. Clare stared at Frank. "Good heavens!" she murmured under her breath. "You are not the son of Major Raynor?"

"No, I am his nephew. My father was the clergyman."

"I—I have heard Major Raynor call you his son!" she debated, hardly believing her own ears. "He has called you so to my face."

"He often does," laughed Frank. "I fear—he is—proud of me—dear, fond old uncle!"

"Well, I never was so deceived in all my life!" ejaculated Mrs. St. Clare.

CHAPTER VIII.

PLANNING OUT THE FUTURE.

It has been already said that there were originally three of the brothers Raynor: Francis, who was an officer in Her Majesty's service; Henry the clergyman; and Hugh the doctor. The youngest of these, Hugh, was the first to marry by several years; the next to marry was Henry. Henry might have married earlier, but could not afford it: he waited until a living was given to him. In the pretty country Rectory attached to his church, he and his wife lived for one brief year of their married life: and then she died, leaving him a little boy-baby, who was named Francis after the clergyman's eldest brother. Some ten years subsequently the Reverend Henry Raynor himself died: and the little boy was an orphan, possessed of just sufficient means to educate him and give him a start in life in some not too costly profession. He chose that of medicine, as his Uncle Hugh had done before him.

The eldest of the three was the last to marry: Captain Raynor. He and his young wife led rather a scrambling sort of life for some years afterwards, always in a puzzle how to make both ends of their straitened income meet: and then a slice of good fortune (as the Captain regarded it) befell him. Some distant relative left him an annuity of five hundred a year. Five hundred a year certain, in addition to his pay, seemed like riches to the Captain: while his unsophisticated and not too-well-managing wife thought they were clear of shoals for life.

Very close upon this, the Captain shot up a step in rank, and obtained his majority. This was succeeded by a very long and severe attack of illness; and the Major, too hastily deciding that he should

never be again fit for active service, sold out. He and his wife settled down in a pretty cottage-villa called Spring Lawn, in the neighbourhood of Bath, bringing up their children there in much the same scrambling sort of fashion that they had previously lived. No order, no method; all good-hearted carelessness, good-natured improvidence. Just as it had been in their earlier days, so it was now: they never knew where to look for a shilling of ready money. That it would be so all through life with Major Raynor, whatever might be the amount of his income, was pretty certain: he was sanguine, off-hand, naturally improvident. The proceeds from the sale of his commission had all vanished, chiefly in paying back debts; the five hundred a year was all they had to live upon, and that five hundred would die with the Major: and, in short, they seemed to be worse off now than before the annuity came. Considering that they spent considerably more than the five hundred yearly, and yet had no comfort to show for it, and that debts had gathered again over the Major's head, it was little to be wondered at that they were not well off. The Major never gave a thought to consequences: debt sat as lightly upon him as though it had been a wreath of laurel leaves. If he did feel slightly worried at times, what mattered it: he should, sooner or later, come into Eagles' Nest, when all things would be smooth as glass. A more prudent man than the Major might have seen cause to entertain a doubt of the absolute certainty of the estate coming to him. He did not: he looked upon the inheritance of it as sure and certain.

The reader has probably not forgotten Mr. and Mrs. Timothy Atkinson—at whose house Edina had stayed so many years ago. Changes had taken place since then. Both the partners in the bank (they were not brothers, but second cousins) were dead: and the firm had long been Atkinson and Street. For, upon the death of the two old men, Mr. George Atkinson, their sole successor, took his managing clerk, Edwin Street, into partnership. The bank was not one of magnitude—I think this has been already said—only a small private one. The acting head of it was, to all intents and purposes, Edwin Street: for Mr. George Atkinson passed the greater portion of his time abroad, making a visit home only every two or three years. He was well off, and did not choose to worry himself with the cares of business: had the bank been given up to-morrow, he would have had plenty of money without it.

During his later life, Mr. Timothy Atkinson had invested the chief portion of his savings in the purchase of an estate in Kent, called Eagles' Nest. He was not a rich man, as bankers go, never having been an equal partner in the firm; drawing from it in fact but a small share. His death at the last was somewhat sudden, and occurred during one of his sojourns at Eagles' Nest. Mrs. Atkinson, his widow; not less portly than of yore, and still much of an invalid; summoned

her two brothers to attend the funeral: Major Raynor from Bath, Dr. Raynor from Trennach. The Major went up at once: Dr. Raynor sent a refusal; his plea of excuse being that he could not leave his patients, the season being one of unusual sickness. This refusal Mrs. Atkinson, never a very genial-natured woman, or at all cordial with her brothers, resented.

When Mr. Timothy Atkinson's will was opened, it was found that he had left everything he possessed to his wife unconditionally. Consequently the estate was now at her own disposal. Though a pretty, compact property, it was not a large one: worth some two thousand a year, but capable of great improvement.

On the day following the funeral, Mrs. Atkinson went up to her house in London, the Major accompanying her. There she found George Atkinson, who had just arrived in England; which was to her an agreeable surprise. He had always been a favourite of hers, and he would be useful to her just now.

"I shall leave it to you, George," she suddenly observed one morning a few days subsequent to this, as they sat together looking over letters and papers.

"Leave what to me, aunt?" For he had taken to call her "aunt" as a child, and did so still.

"Eagles' Nest."

George Atkinson laid down the bundle of letters he was untying, and looked questioningly at the old lady, almost as though he doubted her words.

"I am sure, aunt, you cannot mean that."

"Why can't I mean it, pray?"

"Because it is a thing that you must not think of doing. You have near relatives in your brothers. It is they who should benefit by your will."

"My brothers can't both inherit the place," retorted the old lady.

"The elder of them can—Major Raynor."

"I like you better, George, than I like him."

"I am very glad that you should like me—but not that your liking for me should render you unjust to your family," he returned, firmly but gently. "Indeed, dear Mrs. Atkinson, it would be an act of great injustice if you were to prefer me to them."

"My will ought to be made at once," said the old lady.

"Certainly. And I hope you will not as much as mention my name in it," he added with a smile. "I have so very much of my own, you know, that a bequest from you would be superfluous."

The conversation decided Mrs. Atkinson. She sent for her lawyer, John Street, and had her will drawn up in favour of Major Raynor. Legacies to a smaller or larger amount were bequeathed to a few people, but to Major Raynor was left Eagles' Nest. Her brother Hugh, poor

Dr. Raynor of Trennach, was not mentioned in it: neither was Edina.

The will was made in duplicate: Mrs. Atkinson desired her solicitor to retain possession of one copy; the other she handed to Major Raynor. She affixed her own seal to the envelope in which the will was enclosed, but allowed him first to read it over.

"I don't know how to thank you, aunt, for this," said he, the tears of genuine emotion resting on his eyelashes. "It will be good news for Mary and the young ones."

"Well, I'm told it's the right thing to do, Frank," answered the old lady: who was older than any of her brothers, and had liked to domineer over them in early life.

So Major Raynor went home to Spring Lawn with the will in his pocket, and considered that from that hour all his embarrassments were over. And Mrs. Atkinson gave up her house in London, and stationed herself for life at Eagles' Nest. While George Atkinson, after a month's sojourn, went abroad again.

But now, as ill-fortune had it, Major Raynor had chanced, since that lucky day, to offend his sister. The year following the making of the will, being in London on some matter of business, he took the opportunity to go down to Eagles' Nest—and went without asking permission, or sending word. Whether that fact displeased Mrs. Atkinson, or whether she really did not care to see him at all, certain it was, that she was very cross and crabbed, her temper almost unbearable. The Major had a hot temper himself on occasion, and they came to an issue. A sharp quarrel ensued; and the Major, impulsive in all he did, quitted Eagles' Nest there and then. When he reached Spring Lawn, after staying another week in London to complete his business, he found a letter awaiting him from his sister, telling him that she had altered her will and left Eagles' Nest to Mr. George Atkinson.

"Stupid old thing!" exclaimed the Major, laughing at what he looked upon as an idle threat. "As if she'd do such a thing as that!" For the Major had never had the remotest idea that she had once intended to make George Atkinson her heir.

And from that hour to this, the Major had not once seriously thought of the letter again. He had never since seen Mrs. Atkinson; had never but once heard from her; but he looked upon Eagles' Nest as being as certainly his, as though it were already in his possession. Once every year, at Christmas time, he wrote his sister a letter of good wishes; to which she did not respond. "Ann never went in for civilities," would observe the Major.

The one exception was this. When his eldest son, Charles, had attained his sixteenth year, the Major mentioned the fact in his annual letter to his sister. A few days afterwards, down came an answer from her of some half-dozen lines: in which she briefly offered Charles an

opening (as she called it) in life: meaning, a clerkship in the bank of Atkinson and Street, which her interest would procure for him. Master Charles, who had far higher notions, as befitted the heir to Eagles' Nest, threw up his head in disdain: and the Major wrote a letter of non-acceptance, as brief as the old lady's offer. With that exception, they had never heard from her.

The Major and his wife were both incredibly improvident; he in spending money; she in not knowing how to save it. Yielding and gentle, Mrs. Raynor fell in with anything and everything done by her husband, thinking that because he did it, it must be right. She never suggested to him that they might save cost here, and cut it off there; that this outlay would be extravagant, or that unneeded. There are some women really not capable of forethought, and Mrs. Raynor was one of them. As to doing anything to advance their own self-interest, by cultivating Mrs. Atkinson's favour, both were too single-minded for such an act.

It was with them, his uncle and aunt, that Frank Raynor had spent his holidays when a boy, and all his subsequent intervals of leisure. They were just as fond of Frank as they were of their own children: he was ever welcome. The Major sometimes called him "my son Frank," when speaking of him with strangers; very often indeed "my eldest boy." As to taking people in by so doing, the Major had no such thought; but there is no doubt that it did cause many a one, not acquainted with the actual relationship, to understand and believe that Frank was bonâ fide the Major's son. Possibly their names being the same—Francis—contributed to add to the impression. Amongst those who had caught up the belief, was Mrs. St. Clare. She had occasionally met the Major and Mrs. Raynor in Bath, though the acquaintanceship was of the slightest. When her son, young St. Clare, came into possession of the Mount, and it was known that she was going to remove there, the Major, meeting her one day near the old pump-room, said to her, in the openness of his heart, "I'll write to Trennach to my boy Frank and tell him to make himself useful to you." "Oh," returned Mrs. St. Clare, "have you a boy at Trennach?" "Yes, the eldest of them: he is with his uncle the Doctor," concluded the Major, unsuspiciously. Had he thought it would have created mischief, or even a false impression, he would have swallowed the pump-room, pump and all, before he had spoken it. That the Major was the presumptive heir to Eagles' Nest was well known: and Mrs. St. Clare may be excused for having, under the circumstances, carried with her to her new abode the undoubted belief that Frank would succeed him in the estate.

On the night that the enlightenment took place—when Frank, so candidly and carelessly, disabused Mrs. St. Clare's mind of the impression existing there—he perceived not the chill that the avowal evidently gave her. That it should affect her cordiality to him he never could have

feared. A more worldly nature or a selfish one would have seen in a moment that his non-heirship to Eagles' Nest rendered him a less eligible parti for Margaret; but Frank Raynor was in worldliness, as in selfishness, singularly deficient. And he quitted the Mount when tea was over, quite unconscious that anything had occurred to diminish the favour in which he was held by its mistress.

Not with that was his mind occupied as he walked home; but rather with thoughts of the future. Daisy was to be his; she had promised it; and Frank would have taken her to him to-morrow, could he have provided her with bread-and-cheese. How to do this—at least, what would be the best means of doing it—was puzzling his brain now.

He took the road home over the Bare Plain. Never, since the enactment of that fatal tragedy, had Frank Raynor taken it by choice: he always chose the highway. But to-night he had a patient lying ill in the cottages on the Plain; and Dr. Raynor had said to him, Call in and see Weston, Frank, as you return. The visit paid, he continued his way homewards. It was a light night: there were neither stars nor moon: but a light haze seemed to shade the sky, and served to light up objects. Frank looked towards the Bottomless Shaft as he passed it; his fascinated eyes turning to it of their own accord. Bringing them back with an effort and a shudder, he went onwards at a quicker pace.

"Will it lie there hidden for ever?" he said to himself half aloud. "Pray Heaven that it may!"

Dr. Raynor was sitting in the small room behind his surgery, a room kept chiefly for private consultations with patients; in his hand was a medical journal which he was reading by lamplight. He put it down when Frank entered.

"I want to ask you something, Uncle Hugh," began Frank, impulsively, as though what he was about to say had been weighing on his mind. "Should I have any difficulty, do you think, in dropping into a practice when I leave you?"

"You do mean to leave me, then, Frank?" returned Dr. Raynor, without immediately replying to the question.

"Why, of course I do, Uncle Hugh," said Frank, in slight surprise. "It was always so intended. I came here, you know, for two years, and I have stayed longer."

"And you would not like to stay altogether, and be my partner and successor?"

"No," replied Frank, very promptly. "It would be but a poor living for two people; my share of it very poor, for I could not expect you to give me half. And there are other reasons against it. No, Uncle Hugh, what I want to do is, to jump into some snug little practice in a place where I shall get on. Say in London."

A smile crossed the more experienced Doctor's lips. Young men are so sanguine.

"It is not very easy to 'jump into a snug little practice,' Frank."

"I know that, sir: but there are two ways in which it may be done. One way is, to purchase a share in an established practice; another, to set up well in some likely situation, with a good house and a plate on the door, and all that, and wait for patients to drop in."

"But each of those ways requires money, Frank."

"Oh, of course," acquiesced Frank, with light carelessness, as though money were the most ordinary commodity on earth.

"Well, Frank, where would you get the money from?"

"That's what I want to ask you about, Uncle Hugh. I daresay you remember that when there was so much talk about that will of my Aunt Ann's, it was said that I had a share in it."

"Indeed, Frank, I don't. I remember I was told that she had not left anything to me; and I really remember no more."

"Then you cannot tell me what the amount was?" exclaimed Frank, in an accent of disappointment. "It was that I wanted to ask you."

Dr. Raynor shook his head in the negative. "I have no idea, Frank, whether it was one pound or one thousand. Or many thousands."

"You see, sir, if I knew the exact amount of the sum, I could think upon my plans with more certainty."

"Just so, Frank. As it is, your plans must be somewhat like castles in the air."

"I recollect quite well Uncle Francis telling me that I came in for a good slice. That was the phrase: 'in for a good slice.' He had read the will, you know."

"All I recollect, or know, about it, is, that Francis wrote me word nothing was left to me. He said he had remonstrated with Ann—with your aunt—at leaving my name out of the will, but she ordered him, in reply, to mind his own business. I do not care for it myself; I do not, I am sure, covet any of the money Ann may leave: though I could have wished she had not quite passed over Edina."

"She must have a good deal of money, Uncle Hugh, apart from Eagles' Nest."

"I daresay she has."

"And, if Uncle Francis comes in for that money, I should think he would make over the half of it to you. I should, were I in his place."

"Ah, Frank," smiled the Doctor, "people are not so chivalrously generous in this world: even brothers."

"I should call it justice, not generosity, sir."

"If you come to talk of justice, you would also be entitled to your share, as Henry's son. He was equally her brother."

"But I don't expect anything of the kind," said Frank. "Provided I have enough to set me up in practice, that's all I care for."

"You would not have that until your aunt dies."

"To be sure not. I am not expecting it before. But what has struck me is this, Uncle Hugh—I have been turning the thing over in my mind as I walked home—that I might, without any dishonour, *reckon* upon the money now."

"In what way? How do you mean?"

"Suppose I go to some old-established man in London who, from some cause or other—advancing years, say—requires some one to relieve him of a portion of his daily work. I say to him, 'Will you take me at present as your assistant, at a fair salary, and when I come into my money'—naming the sum—'I will hand that over to you and become your partner?' Don't you think that seems feasible, sir?"

"I daresay it does, Frank."

"But then, you see, to do this, I ought to know the exact sum that is coming to me. Unless I were able to state that, I should not be listened to. That's why, sir, I was in hopes that you could inform me what it was."

"And so I would if I knew it, Frank. I do not think Francis mentioned to me that you would come in for anything. I feel sure he did not, or I should remember it."

"That's awkward," mused Frank, thoughtfully balancing on his right-hand fingers the paper-knife which he had caught up from the table. "I wonder he did not tell you, Uncle Hugh."

"To say the truth, so do I," replied Dr. Raynor. "It would have been good news: and he knows that I am equally interested with himself in the welfare of Henry's orphan son. Are you sure, Frank, that you are making no mistake in this?"

"I don't think I am. I was staying at Spring Lawn when the Major came home from Aunt Atkinson's after her husband's death, and he brought her will with him. He was telling us all about it—that Eagles' Nest was to be his, and that there were several legacies, and he turned to me and said, 'You come in for a good slice, Frank.' I recollect it all, sir, as though it had taken place but yesterday."

"Did he mention what the 'slice' was? How much?"

"No, he did not. And I did not like to ask him."

There was a pause. Dr. Raynor began putting the papers straight on the table, his usual custom before leaving them for the night. Frank had apparently gone into a reverie.

"Uncle Hugh," he cried, briskly, lifting his head, his face glowing with some thought, his frank blue eyes bright with it, "if you can spare me for a couple of days, I will go to Spring Lawn and ask Uncle Francis. I should like to be at some certainty."

"I could spare you, Frank: there's nothing particular on hand that I cannot attend to myself for that short time. But ——"

"Thank you, Uncle Hugh," interrupted Frank, impetuously. "Then suppose I start to-morrow morning?"

"But—I was about to inquire—what is it that has put all this into your head so suddenly?"

Frank's eager eyes, raised to the Doctor's face, fell at the question. A half-conscious smile parted his lips.

"There's no harm, sir, in trying to plan out one's future."

"None in the world, Frank. I only ask the reason of your setting about it in this—as it seems to me—sudden manner."

"Well—you know, Uncle Hugh—I—I may be marrying some-time."

"And you have been fixing on the lady, I see, Frank!"

A whole smile now upon Frank's face. He was sending the paper-knife round in circles on the table, with rather an unnecessary noise. Dr. Raynor's thoughts were going hither and thither: he could not recall any individual in all the neighbourhood of Trennach likely to be honoured by Frank's choice. In an instant an idea flashed over him—and he did not like it.

"Frank! can it be that you are thinking of one of the Miss St. Clares?"

"And if I were, sir?"

"Then—I fear—that there may be trouble in store for you," said the Doctor, gravely. "Mrs. St. Clare would never sanction it."

"But she has sanctioned it, Uncle Hugh. She sanctions it every day of her life."

"Has she told you so?"

"Not in words. But she sees how much I and Daisy are together, and she allows it. *That* will be all right, Uncle Hugh."

"Daisy? Let me see? Oh, that is the young one: she is a nice little girl. I cannot say I like the elder. But ——"

"But what, sir?"

"You are by nature over-sanguine, Frank; and I cannot help think-ing that you are so in this. Rely upon it, there is some mistake: Mrs. St. Clare is a proud, haughty woman, remarkably alive, unless I am mistaken, to self-interest. She would not be likely to give a daughter to one whose prospects are so uncertain as yours."

"But I am wishing to make my prospects more certain, you see, uncle. And I can assure you, she approves of me for Daisy."

"Well, well; if so, I am glad to hear it. Nevertheless it surprises me. I should have supposed she would look in a higher rank for suitors for her daughters. The little girl is a nice girl, I say, Frank, and you have my best wishes."

"Thank you, Uncle Hugh," warmly repeated Frank, rising, his whole face flushing with pleasure as he met the Doctor's hand. "Of course

you understand that it must not yet be talked of: I must speak to Mrs. St. Clare first."

"I shall not be likely to talk of it," replied Dr. Raynor.

CHAPTER IX.

MAJOR AND MRS. RAYNOR.

THE windows of Spring Lawn stood open to the afternoon sun. It was a small, pretty white house, half cottage, half villa, situated about three miles from Bath. A latticed portico, over which crept the white-blossomed clematis, led into a miniature hall: Major Raynor could just turn round in it. On either side was a small sitting-room, the dining-room on the left, the drawing-room on the right.

The scrambling mid-day dinner was over. Somehow all the meals seemed to be scrambling ones at the Major's, from the utter want of order. Unless Edina was there to maintain it: and that was but a chance event: a brief and rare interlude, occurring at long intervals in life. Some wine stood on the old red-and-blue checked table-cover, with a plate of biscuits. On one side of the table sat the Major: a tall and very portly man with a bald head and a white moustache, looking every day of his nine-and-sixty years. He had been getting on for fifty when he married his young wife; who was not quite eight-and-thirty yet: a delicate, fragile-looking woman, with a small fair face and gentle voice, mild blue eyes, a pink colour, and thin light brown hair quietly braided back from it. Mrs. Raynor looked what she was: a yielding, amiable, helpless woman; one who could never be strong-minded in any emergency whatever, but somehow one to be loved at first sight.

She sat sideways to the table—as indeed did the Major opposite, their faces turned to the window—her feet on a footstool, and her hands busy with work, apparently a new frock she was making for one of her younger children. She wore a faded muslin gown, green its predominant colour; a score of pins, pertaining to the work in process, sticking in her waistband.

They were talking of the weather. The Major was generally in a state of heat. To-day he had walked into Bath and back again, and got in late for dinner, puffing and steaming, for it was up-hill. He liked to have a fly one way at least; but he had not always the money in his pocket to pay for it.

"Yes, it was like an oven in the sun, Mary," continued he, enlarging upon the weather. "I don't remember any one single year that the heat has come upon us so early."

"That's why I have a good deal of sewing to do just now," observed Mrs. Raynor. "We have had to take to our summer things before

they were ready. Look at poor dear little Robert! The child must be melted in that stuff frock."

"What's the nurse about?—can't she make him one?" asked the Major.

"Oh, Francis, she has so much to do. With all these children! She does some sewing; but she has not time for much."

The Major, sipping his wine just then, looked over the rim of his glass at the children, sitting on the grass-plat. Four of them, in whose ages there was evidently more than the ordinary difference between brothers and sisters. One looked like a nearly grown-up young lady. That was Alice. She wore a washed-out cotton dress and a frayed black silk apron. Alfred was the next, aged ten, in an old brown holland blouse and tumbled hair. Kate, in another washed-out cotton and a pinafore, was eight: and Robert was just turned three, a chubby, fat child in a thick woollen plaid frock. They were stemming cowslips to make balls, and were as happy as the day was long.

"I saw Mrs. Manners in Bath this morning," resumed the Major. "She says she is coming to spend a long day here."

"I hope she'll not come until Bobby's new frock is finished," said Mrs. Raynor, her fingers plying the needle more swiftly at the thought. "He looks so shabby in that old thing."

"As if it mattered? Who cares what children have on?"

"Oh I forgot to tell you, Francis—the butcher asked to see me this morning: he came over for orders himself. He says he must have some money."

"Oh, does he?" returned the Major, with careless unconcern. "I don't know when I shall have any for him, I'm sure. Did you tell him so?"

"I did not go to him: I sent Charley. I do hope he will not stop the meat!"

"As if he would do that!" cried the Major, throwing up his head with a beaming smile. "He knows I shall come into plenty of money sooner or later."

At this moment the children came rushing with one accord to the window, and stood—those who were tall enough—with their arms on its sill, Alice with the cowslips gathered up in her apron. Little Robert—often called Baby—who toddled up last, could only stretch his hands up to the edge of the sill.

"Mamma—papa," said Alice, a graceful girl, with the clearly-cut Raynor features and her mother's mild blue eyes, "we want to have a little party and a feast of strawberries and cream. It would be so delightful out here on the grass, with tables and chairs, and ——"

"The strawberries are not in yet," interrupted the Major. "Except those in the expensive shops."

"When they are in, we mean, papa. Shall we?"

"To be sure," said papa, as pleased with the idea as were the children. "Perhaps we could borrow a cow and make some syllabubs!"

Back ran the children, to fall on the grass again, and plan out pleasure for the anticipated feast. Alice was seventeen; but in mind and manners she was still very much of a child. As they quitted the window, the room door opened, and a tall, slender, well-dressed stripling entered. It was the eldest son, Charles Raynor. He also had the well-formed features of the Raynor family, dark eyes and dark chestnut hair; altogether a very nice-looking young man.

"Why, Charley, I thought you were out!"

"I have been lying down under the tree at the back, finishing my book," said Charley. "And now I am going into Bath to change it."

It was the greatest pity—at least most sensible people would have deemed it so—to see a fine, capable young fellow wasting the best days of his existence. This, the period of his dawning manhood, was the time when he ought to have been at work, preparing to run his career in this working world. Instead of that, he was passing it in absolute idleness. Well for him that he had no vice in his nature: or the old proverb, about idle hands and Satan and mischief, might have been exemplified in him. All the reproach that could at present be cast on him was, that he was utterly useless, thoroughly idle: and perhaps he was not to blame for it, as nothing had been given him to do.

Charles Raynor was brought up to no profession, or business. Various callings had been talked of now and again in a desultory manner; but Major and Mrs. Raynor, in their easy-going negligence, had brought nothing to pass. As the heir to Eagles' Nest, they deemed he would not require to exercise his talents on the score of means: Charles himself decidedly deemed so. Gratuitous commissions in the army did not seem to be coming Major Raynor's way; he had not the means to purchase one: and, truth to tell, Charles's inclinations did not tend to fighting. The same drawback, want of money, applied to other possibilities: and so, Charles had been allowed to remain unprofitably at home, doing nothing; very much to his own satisfaction. If obliged to choose some profession for himself, he would have fixed on the Bar: but, first of all, he wanted to go to one of the two universities. Everything was to be done, in every way, when Eagles' Nest dropped in: *that* would be the panacea for all present ills. Meanwhile, Major Raynor was content to let the time slip easily away unheeded, until that desirable consummation should arrive, and to allow his son to let it slip away easily too.

"Charley, I wish you'd bring me back a Madeira cake, if you are going into Bath."

All right, mamma."

"And, Charley," added the Major, "just call in at Steer's and get those seeds for the garden."

"Very well," said Charley. "Will they let me have the things without the money?"

"Oh yes. They'll put them down."

Charley gave a brush to his coat in the little hall, put on his hat, and started, book in hand. As he was passing the children, they plied him with questions: where he was going, and what to do.

"To the library to change my book."

"Oh, I'll go too!" cried Alfred, jumping to his feet. "Let me go with you, Charley!"

"I don't mind," said Charley. "You'll carry the book. How precious hot it is! Take care you don't get a sunstroke, Alice."

Alice hastily pulled her old straw hat over her forehead, and went on with her work at the cowslips. "Charley, do you think you could bring me back a new crochet-needle?" she asked. "I'll give you the old one for the size."

"Hand it over," said Charley. "I shall have to bring back all Bath if I get many more orders. I say, youngster, you don't think, I hope, that you are going with me in that trim!"

Alfred looked down at his blouse, and at the rent in the hem of his trousers.

"What shall I put on, Charley? My Sunday clothes? I won't be a minute."

The boy ran into the house, and Charles strolled leisurely towards the little gate. He reached it just in time to meet some one who was entering. One moment's pause to gaze at each other, and then their hands were clasped.

"Frank!"

"Charley!"

"How surprised I am! Come in. You are about the last fellow I should have expected to see."

Frank laughed gaily. He enjoyed taking them by surprise in this way; enjoyed the gladness shining from their eyes at sight of him, the hearty welcome.

"I daresay I am. How are you all, Charley? There are the young ones, I see! Is that Alice? She *has* grown!"

Alice came bounding to meet him, dropping the yellow blossoms from her apron. They had not seen him since the previous Christmas twelvemonth, when he had spent a week at Spring Lawn. Little Robert did not know him, and stood back, shyly staring.

"And is this my dear little Bob?" cried Frank, catching him up and kissing him. "Why, he has grown into a man! Does he remember brother Frank? And—why, there's mamma!—and papa! come along."

The child still in his arms, he went on to meet Major and Mrs. Raynor, who were hastening forth with outstretched hands of greeting.

"This sight is better than gold!" cried the Major. "How are you, my dear boy?"

"We thought we were never to see you again," put in Mrs. Raynor. "How good of you to come!"

"I am come to take just a peep at you all. It seems ages since I was here."

"Are you come for a month?"

"A month!" laughed Frank. "For two days."

"Oh! Nonsense!"

And so the bustle and the greetings continued. Major Raynor poured him out a glass of wine, though Frank protested it was too hot for wine, especially after his walk from Bath. Mrs. Raynor went to see her cook about sending in something substantial with the tea. Charles put off his walk, and the young ones seduced Frank to the grass plat to help with the cowslip balls.

And Frank never gave the slightest intimation that he had come from Trennach for any purpose, save that of seeing them. But at night, when bedtime came and Mrs. Raynor went upstairs, leaving the Major, as usual, to finish his glass and pipe, Frank drew his chair up as though he meant to stay too.

"You can go on without me, Charley, or remain; just as you like. I want to say a few words to my uncle."

He then disclosed the real purport of his visit — namely, the ascertaining from Major Raynor what was the amount of money coming to him under Mrs. Atkinson's will. Explaining at the same time why he wished to ascertain this: his intention to get into practice in London, and his ideas for accomplishing it. Just as he had explained the matter to Dr. Raynor at Trennach, the previous night.

"You see, Uncle Francis, it is time I was getting a start in life," he urged. "I am midway between twenty and thirty. I don't care to remain an assistant-surgeon longer."

"Of course you don't," said the Major, gently puffing away. "Help yourself, Frank."

"Not any more, thank you, uncle. And so, as the first preliminary step, I want you to tell me, if you have no objection, what the sum is that Aunt Ann has put me down for."

"Can't recollect a bit, Frank."

"But—don't you think this idea of mine is a good one?— the getting some well-established man to take me in on the strength of this money?" asked Frank, eagerly. "I cannot see any other chance of setting up."

"It's a capital idea," said the Major, taking a good draught of whiskey-and-water.

"Well, then, Uncle Francis, I hope you will not object to tell me what the amount is."

"My boy, I'd tell you at once if I knew it. I don't recollect it the least in the world."

"Not recollect it!" exclaimed Frank.

"No, I don't."

It was a check for Frank. His good-natured face looked rather blank. Charley, who had chosen to remain, sat nursing his knee and listening.

"Could you not recollect it if you tried, uncle?"

"I am trying," said the Major. "My thoughts are back in the matter now. Let me see—what were the terms of the will? I know I had Eagles' Nest; and—yes—I think I am right—I was also named residuary legatee. Yes, I was. That much I do remember."

Frank's face broke into smiles. "It would be strange if you forgot *that*, uncle. Try and remember some more."

"Let me see," repeated the Major, passing his unoccupied hand over his bald head. "There were several legacies, I know; and I think—yes, I do think, Frank—your name stood first on the list of them. But, dash me, if I can recollect for how much."

"Was it for pounds, or hundreds, or thousands?" questioned Frank.

"That's what I can't tell. Hang it all! my memory's not worth a rush now. When folks get old, Frank, their memory fails them."

"I remember the words you said to me at the time, Uncle Francis: they were that I came in for a good slice."

"Did I? When?"

"When you came back from London, and were telling my aunt about the will. I was present: it was in this very room. 'You come in for a good slice, Frank,' you said, turning round to me."

"Didn't I say how much?"

"No. And I did not much like to ask you. Of course you knew how much it was?"

"Of course I did. I read the will."

"I wish you could remember."

"I wish I could, Frank. I ought to. I'll sleep upon it, and perhaps it will come to me in the morning."

"Where is the will?" asked Charles, speaking for the first time. "Don't you hold it, papa?"

Major Raynor took his long pipe from his mouth, and turned the end towards an old-fashioned, imitation walnut bureau, that stood by the side of the fireplace. The upper part of it was his own, and was always kept locked; the lower part consisted of three drawers, which were used indiscriminately by Mrs. Raynor and the children.

"It's in there," said the Major. "I put it there when I brought it home, and I've never looked at it since."

As if the thought suddenly came to him to look at it then, he put his pipe in the fender, took a bunch of keys from his pocket, and unlocked the bureau. It disclosed some pigeon-holes above, some small, shallow drawers beneath them, three on each side, and one deeper drawer in the middle. Selecting another key, he unlocked this last, pulled the drawer quite out, and put it on the table. Two sealed parchments lay within it.

"Ay, this is it," said the Major, selecting one of them. "See, here's the superscription: 'Will of Mistress Ann Atkinson.' And that is my own will," he added, nodding to the other. "See, Charley: you'll know where to find it in case of need. Not that any of you would be much the better for it, my lad, as things are at present. They will be different with us when Eagles' Nest comes in."

Frank had taken the packet from the Major's hand, and was looking at the seal: a large red seal, with an imposing impression.

"I suppose you would not like to open this will, uncle? Would it be wrong to do so?"

The Major shook his head, slowly but decisively. "I can't open it, Frank. Although I know its contents—at least, I did once know them—to open it would seem like a breach of confidence. Your Aunt Ann sealed the will herself in my presence, after I had read it. 'Don't let it be opened, Francis, until my death,' she said, as she handed it to me. And so, you see, I should not like to do it."

"Of course not," readily spoke Frank, "I could not wish you to do so. Perhaps, uncle, you will, as you say, recollect more when you have slept upon it."

"Ay, perhaps so. I have an idea, mind you, Frank, that it was a very good slice; a substantial sum."

"What should you call substantial?" asked Frank, with a smile.

"Two or three thousand pounds."

"I do hope it was!" returned Frank, his face beaming. "I could move the world with all that."

But the Major did not return the smile. Sundry experiences of his own were obtruding themselves on his memory.

"We are all apt to think so, my boy. But nobody knows, until they try it, how quickly a sum of ready money melts. While you are saying I'll do this with it, or I'll do that—hey, presto! it is gone. And you sit looking blankly at your empty hands, and wonder what you've spent it in."

Taking the drawer, with the two wills in it, he put it back in its place, locking it and the bureau safely as before. And then he went up to bed to "sleep upon it," and try and get back his recollection as to an item that one of those wills contained.

Morning came. One of the same hot and glorious days that the few last had been: and the window was thrown open to the

breakfast-table. The children, in their somewhat dilapidated attire, but with their fresh, fair, healthy faces and happy tempers, sat round it eating piles of bread-and-butter, and eggs ad libitum. Mrs. Raynor, in the same faded muslin gown that she had worn the day before, presided over a dish of sliced ham, while Alice poured out the coffee. It seemed natural to Mrs. Raynor that she should take the part, no matter at what, that gave her the least trouble: kind, loving, gentle, she always was, but very incapable.

The Major was not present. The Major liked to lie in bed rather late in a morning; which was not good for him. But for his indolent habits, he need not have been quite so stout. Frank Raynor glanced at the bureau, opposite to him as he sat, and wondered whether his uncle had recollected more about the one desired item of the will within it during his sleep.

"Has Uncle Francis had a good night, aunt?" asked Frank, who was inwardly just as impatient as he could be for news, and perhaps thought he might gather some idea by the question.

"My dear, he always sleeps well," said Mrs. Raynor. "*Too* well, I think. It is not good for a man of his age."

"How can a man sleep too well, mamma?" cried one of the children.

"Well, my darlings, I judge by the snoring. Poor papa snores dreadfully in his sleep."

"Will he be long before he's down, do you suppose, Aunt Mary?"

"I hear him getting up, Frank. He is early this morning because you are here."

And, indeed, in a minute or two the Major entered: his flowery silk dressing-gown—all the worse for wear, like the children's clothes—flowing around him, his hearty voice sending forth its greeting. For some little time the children kept up an incessant fire of questions; Frank could not get one in. But his turn came.

"Have you remembered that, Uncle Francis, now that you have slept upon it?"

The Major looked across the table. Just for the moment he did not speak. Frank went on eagerly.

"Sometimes things that have dropped out of our memory come back to us in a dream. I have heard of instances. Did it chance so to you last night, uncle?"

"My dear boy, I dreamt a great big shark with open jaws was running after me, and I could not get out of the water."

"Then—have you not recollected anything?"

"I fear not, Frank. I shall see as the day goes on."

But the day went on, and no recollection upon the point came back to Major Raynor. He "slept upon it" a second night, and still with the same result.

"I am very sorry, my boy," he said, grasping Frank's hand at parting, as they stood alone together on the grass plat for a moment. "Goodness knows, I'd tell you if I could. Should the remembrance come to me later—and I daresay it will: I don't see why it should not—I'll write off at once to you at Trennach. Meanwhile, you may safely count on one thing—that the sum's a large one."

"You think so?" said Frank.

"I do more than think so: I'm next door to sure of it. It's in the thousands. Yes, I feel certain of that."

"And so will I, then, uncle, in my own mind." It would have been strange had Frank, with his ultra-sanguine nature, not thought so, thus encouraged. "I can be laying out my plans accordingly."

"That you may safely do. And look here, Frank, my boy: even should it turn out that I'm mistaken—though I know I am not," continued the open-hearted Major, "*I* can make it up to you. As residuary legatee—and I do remember that much correctly now—I shall come into many thousands of ready money; and some of it shall be yours if you want it."

"How good you are, uncle!" cried Frank, his deep blue eyes shining forth their gratitude.

"And I'll tell you something more, my boy. Though I hardly like to speak of it," added the Major, dropping his voice, "and I've never mentioned it at home: for it would seem as though I were looking out for poor Ann's death, which I'd not do for the world. Neither would you, Frank."

"Certainly not, Uncle Francis. What is it?"

"Well, I had a letter the other day on some business of my own from Street the lawyer. He chanced to mention in it that he had been down to Eagles' Nest: and he added in a postscript that he was shocked to see the change in your Aunt Ann. In fact, he intimated that a very short period of time must bring the end. So you perceive, Frank, my boy—though, as I say, it sounds wrong and mean to speak of it—you may go back quite at your ease; for all the money you require will speedily be yours."

And Frank Raynor went back accordingly, feeling as certain of the good fortune coming to him, as though it had been told down before his eyes in golden guineas.

(*To be continued.*)

KETIRA THE GIPSY.

"I TELL you what it is, Abel. You think of everybody else before yourself. The Squire says there's no sense in it."

"No sense in what, Master Johnny?"

"Why, in supplying those ill-doing Standishes with your substance. Herbs, and honey, and medicine—they are always getting something or other out of you."

"But they generally *need* it, sir."

"Well, they don't deserve it, you know. The Squire went into a temper to-day, saying the vagabonds ought to be left to starve if they did not choose to work, instead of being helped by the public."

Our hen-roosts had been robbed, and it was pretty certain that one or other of the Standish brothers was the thief. Perhaps all three had a hand in it. Chancing to pass Abel Crew's garden, where he was at work, I turned in to tell him of the raid; and stayed, talking. It was pleasant to sit on the bench outside the cottage window, and watch him tend his roots and flowers. The air was redolent of perfume; the bees were humming as they sailed in the summer sunshine from herb to herb, flower to flower; the dark blue sky was unclouded.

"Just look at those queer-looking people, Abel! They must be gipsies."

Abel let his hands rest on his rake, and lifted his eyes to the common. Crossing it, came two women, one elderly, one very young—a girl, in fact. Their red cloaks shone in the sun; very coarse and sunburnt straw hats were tied down with red kerchiefs. That they belonged to the gipsy fraternity was apparent at the first glance. Pale olive complexions, the elder one's almost yellow, were lighted up with black eyes of wonderful brilliancy. The young girl was strikingly beautiful; her features clearly cut and delicate, as though carved from marble, her smooth and abundant hair of a purple black. The other's hair was purple black also, and had not a grey thread in it.

"They must be coming to tell our fortunes, Abel," I said jestingly. For the two women seemed to be making direct for the gate.

No answer from Abel, and I turned to look at him. He was gazing at the coming figures with the most intense gaze, a curious expression of inquiring doubt on his face. The rake fell from his hand.

"My search is ended," spoke the woman, halting at the gate, her glittering black eyes scanning him intently. "You are Abel Carew."

"Is it Ketira?" he asked, the words dropping from him in slow hesitation, as he took a step forward.

"Am I so much changed that you need doubt it for a moment?"

she returned: and her tone and accent fell soft and liquid; her diction was of the purest, with just the slightest foreign ring in it. "Forty years have rolled on since you and I met, Abel Carew; but I come of a race whose faces do not change. As we are in youth, so we are in age—save for the inevitable traces left by time."

"And this?" questioned Abel, as he looked at the girl and drew back his gate.

"She is Ketira also; my youngest and dearest. The youngest of sixteen children, Abel Carew; and every one of them, save herself, lying under the sod."

"What—dead?" he exclaimed. "Sixteen!"

"Fifteen are dead, and are resting in peace in different lands: ten of them died in infancy ere I had well taken my first look at their little faces. She is the sixteenth. See you the likeness?" added the gipsy, pointing to the girl's face; as she stood, modest and silent, a conscious colour tingeing her olive cheeks, and glancing up now and again through her long black eyelashes at Abel Carew.

"Likeness to you, Ketira?"

"Not to me: though there exists enough of it between us to betray that we are mother and daughter. To him—her father."

And, while Abel was looking at the girl, I looked. And in that moment it struck me that her face bore a remarkable likeness to his own. The features were of the same high-bred cast, pure and refined; you might have said they were made in the same mould.

"I see; yes," said Abel.

"He has been gone, too, this many a year; as you, perhaps, may know, Abel; and is with the rest, waiting for us in the spirit-land. Kettie does not remember him, it is so long ago. There are only she and I left to go now. Kettie ——"

She suddenly changed her language to one I did not understand. Neither, as was easy to be seen, did Abel Carew. Whether it was Hebrew, or Egyptian, or any other rare tongue, I knew not; but I had never in my life heard its sounds before.

"I am telling Kettie that in you she may see what her father was —for the likeness in your face and his, allowing for the difference of age, is great."

"Does Kettie not speak English?" inquired Abel.

"Oh, yes, I speak it," answered the girl, slightly smiling, and her tones were soft and perfect as those of her mother.

"And where have you been since his death, Ketira? Stationary in Ai——"

He dropped his voice to a whisper at the last word, and I did not catch it. I suppose he did not intend me to.

"Not stationary for long anywhere," she answered, passing into the cottage with a majestic step. I lifted my hat to the women—who,

for all their gipsy dress and origin, seemed to command consideration —and made off.

The arrival of these curious people caused some commotion at Church Dykely. It was so rare we had any event to enliven us. They took up their abode in a lonely cottage no better than a hut (one room up and one down) that stood within that lively place, the wilderness on the outskirts of Chanasse Grange; and there they stayed. How they got a living nobody knew: some thought the gipsy must have an income, others that Abel helped them.

"She was very handsome in her youth," he said to me one day, as if he wished to give some explanation of the arrival I had chanced to witness. "Handsomer and finer by far than her daughter is; and one who was very near of kin to me married her: *would* marry her. She was a born gipsy, of what is called a high-caste tribe."

That was all he said. For Abel's sake, who was so respected, Church Dykely felt inclined to give respect to the women. But, when it was discovered that Ketira would tell the fortune of anyone who cared to go surreptitiously to her lonely hut, the respect cooled down. "Ketira the gipsy," she was universally called: nobody knew her by any other name. The fortune-telling came to the ears of Abel, arousing his indignation. He went to Ketira in distress, begging of her to cease such practices—but she waved him majestically out of the hut, and bade him mind his own business. Occasionally the mother and daughter shut up their dwelling and disappeared for weeks together. It was assumed they went to attend fairs and races, encamping out with the gipsy fraternity. Kettie at all times and seasons was modest and good; never was an unmaidenly look seen from her, or a bold word heard. In appearance and manner and diction she might have been a born lady, and a high-bred one. Graceful and innocent was Kettie; but heedless and giddy, as girls are apt to be.

"Look there, Johnny!"

We were at Worcester races, walking about on the course. I turned at Tod's words, and saw Ketira the gipsy, her red cloak gleaming in the sun, just as it had gleamed that day, a year before, on Dykely Common. For the past month she had been away, and her cottage shut up.

She stood at the open door of a carriage, reading the hand of the lady inside it. A notable object was Ketira on the course, with her quaint attire, her majestic figure, her fine olive-dark features, and the fire of her brilliant eyes. What good or ill luck she was promising, I know not; but I saw the lady turn pale and snatch her hand away. "You cannot *know* what you tell me," she cried in a haughty tone, sharp enough and loud enough to be heard.

"Wait and see," rejoined Ketira, turning away.

"So you have come here to see the fun, Ketira," I said to her, as she was brushing by me. During the past year I had seen more of her than many people had, and we had grown familiar; for she, as she once expressed it, "took" to me.

"The fun and the business; the pleasure and the wickedness," she answered, with a sweep of the hand round the course. "There's plenty of it abroad."

"Is Kettie not here?" I asked: and the question made her eyes glare. Though, why, I was at a loss to know, seeing that a race-ground is the legitimate resort of gipsies.

"Kettie! Do you suppose I bring Kettie to *these* scenes—to be gazed at by this ribald mass?"

"Well, it is a rabble, and a good one," I answered, looking at the crowd.

"Nay, boy," said she, following my glance, "it's not the rabble Kettie need fear, as you count rabble; it's their betters"—swaying her arms towards the carriages, and the dandies, their owners or guests; some of whom were balancing themselves on the steps to talk to the pretty girls within, and some were strolling about the enclosed paddock, forbidden ground but to the "upper few." "Ketira is too fair to be shown to *them*."

"They would not eat her, Ketira."

"No, they would not eat her," she replied in a dreamy tone, as if her thoughts were elsewhere.

"And I don't see any other harm they could do her, guarded by you."

"Boy," she said, dropping her voice to an impressive whisper, and lightly touching my arm with her yellow hand, "I have read Kettie's fate in the stars, and I see that there is some great and grievous peril approaching her. It *may* be averted; there's just a chance that it may: meanwhile I am encompassing her about with care, guarding her as the apple of my eye."

"And if it should not be averted?" I asked in the moment's impulse, carried away by the woman's impressive earnestness.

"Then woe be to those who bring the evil upon her!"

"And of what nature is the evil?"

"I know not," she replied, her eyes taking again their dreamy, far-off look. "Woe is me!—for I know it not."

"How do you do, Ludlow? Not here alone, are you?"

A good-looking young fellow, Hyde Stockhausen, had reined in his horse to ask the question: giving at the same time a keen glance to the gipsy woman and then a half smile at me, as if he suspected I was having my fortune told.

"The rest are on the course somewhere. The Squire is driving old Jacobson about."

As Hyde nodded and rode on, I chanced to see Ketira's face. It was stretched out after him with the most eager gaze on it, a defiant look in her black eyes. I thought Stockhausen must have offended her.

"Do you know him?" I asked involuntarily.

"I never saw him before; but I don't like him," she answered, showing her white and gleaming teeth. "Who is he?"

"His name is Stockhausen."

"I don't like him," she repeated in a muttering tone. "He is an enemy. I don't like his look."

Considering that he was a well-looking man, with a pleasant face and gay blue eyes, a face that no reasonable spirit could take umbrage at, I wondered to hear her say this.

"You must have a peculiar taste in looks, Ketira, to dislike his."

"You don't understand," she said abruptly: and, turning away, disappeared in the throng.

Only once more did I catch sight of Ketira that day. It was at the lower end of Pitchcroft, near the show. She was standing in front of a booth, staring at a group of horsemen who seemed to have met and halted there, one of whom was young Stockhausen. Again the notion crossed me that he must in some way have affronted her. It was on him her eyes were fixed: and in them lay the same curious, defiant expression of antagonism, mingled with fear.

Hyde Stockhausen was the step-son of old Massock of South Crabb. The Stockhausens had a name in Worcestershire for dying off, as I have told the reader before. Hyde's father had proved no exception. After his death the widow married Massock the brickmaker, putting up with the man's vulgarity for the sake of his riches. It took people by surprise: for she had been a lady always, as Miss Hyde and as Mrs. Stockhausen: one might have thought she would rather have put up with a clown from Pershore fair than with Massock the illiterate. Hyde Stockhausen was well educated: his uncle, Tom Hyde the parson, had taken care of that. At twenty-one he came into some money, and at once began to do his best to spend it. He was to have been a parson, but could not get through at Oxford, and gave up trying for it. His uncle quarrelled with him then: he knew Hyde had not *tried* to pass, and that he openly said nobody should make a parson of *him*. After the quarrel, Hyde went off to see what the Continent was like. He stayed so long that the world at home thought he was lost. For the past ten or eleven months he had been back at his mother's at South Crabb, knocking about; as Massock phrased it to the Squire one day. Hyde said he was "looking out" for something to do: but he was quite easy as to the future, feeling sure his old uncle would leave him well off. Parson Hyde had never married; and had plenty of money to bequeath to somebody. As to Hyde's own money, that had nearly come to an end.

Naturally old Massock (an ill-conditioned kind of man) grew impatient over this state of things, reproaching Hyde with his idle habits, which were a bad example for his own sons. And only just before this very day that we were on Worcester racecourse, rumours reached Church Dykely that Stockhausen was coming over to settle there and superintend certain fields of brick-making, which Massock had recently purchased and commenced working. As if Massock could not have kept himself and his bricks at South Crabb! But it was hardly likely that Hyde, really a gentleman, would take to brick-making.

We did not know much of him. His connection with Massockhad kept people aloof. Many who would have been glad enough to make friends with Hyde would not do it as long as he had his home at Massock's. His mother's strange and fatal marriage with the man (fatal as regarded her place in society) told upon Hyde, and there's no doubt he must have felt the smart.

The rumour proved to be correct. Hyde Stockhausen took up his abode at Church Dykely, as overseer, or clerk, or manager—whatever might be the right term for it—of the men employed in his stepfather's brick operations. The pretty little house, called Virginia Cottage, owned by Henry Rimmer, which had the Virginia creeper trailing up its red walls, and flowers clustering in its productive garden, was furnished for him; and Hyde installed himself in it as thoroughly and completely as though he had entered on brick-making for life. Some people laughed. "But it's only while I am turning myself round," he said, one day, to the Squire.

Hyde soon got acquainted with Church Dykely, and would drop into people's houses of an evening, laughing over his occupation, and saying he should be able to make bricks himself in time. His chief work seemed to be in standing about the brick-yard watching the men, and in writing and book-keeping at home. Old Massock made his appearance once a month, when accounts and such-like items were gone over between them.

When it was that Hyde first got on speaking terms with Kettie, or where, or how, I cannot tell. So far as I know, nobody could tell. It was late in the autumn when Ketira and her daughter came back to their hut; and by the following early spring some of us had grown accustomed to seeing Hyde and Kettie together in an evening, snatching a short whisper or a five minutes' walk. In March, I think it was, she and Ketira went away again, and returned in May.

The twenty-ninth of May was at that time kept as a holiday in Worcestershire, though it has dropped out of use as such in late years. In Worcester itself there was a grand procession, which country people went in to see, and a special service in the cathedral. We had service also at Church Dykely, and the villagers adorned their front-doors

with immense oak boughs, sprays of which we young ones wore in our jackets, the oak-balls and leaves gilded. I remember one year that the big bough (almost a tree) which Henry Rimmer had hoisted over his sign, the "Silver Bear," came to grief. Whether Rimmer had not secured it as firmly as usual, or that the cords were rotten, down came the huge bough with a crash on old Mr. Stirling's head, who chanced to be coming out of the inn. He went on at Rimmer finely, vowing his neck was broken, and that Rimmer ought to be hung up there himself.

On this twenty-ninth of May I met Kettie. It was on the common, near Abel Carew's. Kettie had caught up the fashion of the place, and wore a little spray of oak peeping out from between the folds of her red cloak. And I may as well say that neither she nor her mother ever went out without the cloak. In cold and heat, in rain and sunshine, the red cloak was worn out of doors.

"Are you making holiday to-day, Kettie?"

"Not more than usual; all days are the same to us," she answered, in her sweet, soft voice, and with the slightly foreign accent that attended the speech of both. But Kettie had it more strongly than her mother.

"You have not gilded your oak-ball."

Kettie glanced down at the one ball, nestling amid its green leaves. "I had no gilding to put on it, Mr. Johnny."

"No! I have some in my pocket. Let me gild it for you."

Her teeth shone like pearls as she smiled and held out the spray. How beautiful she was! with those delicate features and the large dark eyes!—eyes that were softer than Ketira's. Taking the little paper book from my pocket, and some of the gilt leaf from between its tissue leaves, I wetted the oak-ball and gilded it. Kettie watched intently.

"Where did you get it all from?" she asked, meaning the gilt leaf.

"I bought it at Hewitt's. Don't you know the shop? A stationer's; next door to Pettipher the druggist's. Hewitt does no end of a trade in these leaves on the twenty-ninth of May."

"Did you buy it to gild oak-balls for yourself, sir?"

"For the young ones at home: Hugh and Lena. There it is, Kettie."

Had it been a ball of solid gold that I put into her hand, instead of a gilded oak-ball, Kettie could not have shown more intense delight. Her cheeks flushed; the wonderful brilliancy that joy brought to her eyes caused my own eyes to turn away. For her eighteen years she was childish in some things; very much so, considering the experience that her wandering life must (as one would suppose) have brought her. In replacing the spray within her cloak, Kettie dropped

something out of her hand—apparently a small box folded in paper. I picked it up.

"Is it a fairing, Kettie? But this is not fair time."

"It is—I forget the name," she replied, looking at me and hesitating. "My mother is ill; the pains are in her shoulder again; and my Uncle Abel has given me this to rub upon it, the same that did her good before. I cannot just call the name to mind in the English tongue."

"Say it in your own."

She spoke a very outlandish word, laughed, and turned red again. Certainly there never lived a more modest girl than Kettie.

"Is it liniment?—ointment?"

"Yes, it is that, the last," she said: "Abel calls it so. I thank you for what you have done for me, sir. Good day."

To show so much gratitude for that foolish bit of gilt leaf on her oak-ball! It illumined every line of her face. I liked Kettie: liked her for her innocent simplicity. Had she not been a gipsy, many a gentleman might have been proud to make her his wife.

Close upon that, it was known that Ketira was laid up with rheumatism. The weather came in hot, and the days went on: and Kettie and Hyde were now and then seen together.

One evening, on leaving Mrs. Scott's, where we had been to arrange with Sam to go fishing with us on the morrow, Tod said he would invite Hyde Stockhausen to be of the party; so we took Virginia Cottage on our road home, and asked for Hyde.

"Not at home!" retorted Tod, resenting the old woman's answer, as though it had been a personal affront. "Where is he?"

"Master Hyde has only just stepped out, sir; twenty minutes ago, or so," said she, pleadingly excusing the fact. Which was but natural: she had been Hyde's nurse when he was a child; and had now come here to do for him. "I daresay, sir, he be only walking about a bit, to get the fresh air."

Tod whistled some bars of a tune thoughtfully. He did not like to be crossed.

"Well, look here, Mrs. Preen," said he. "Some of us are going to fish in the long pond on Mr. Jacobson's grounds to-morrow: tell Mr. Hyde that if he would like to join us, I shall be happy to see him. Breakfast, half past eight o'clock; sharp."

In turning out beyond the garden, I could not help noticing how pretty and romantic was the scene. A good many trees grew about that part, thick enough almost for a wood in places; and the light and shade, cast by the moon on the grass amidst them, had quite a weird appearance. It was a bright night; the moon high in the sky.

"Is that Hyde?" cried Tod.

Halting for a moment in doubt, he peered out over the field to the

listance. Some one was leisurely pacing under the opposite trees. *Two* people, I thought: but they were completely in the shade.

"I think it is Hyde, Tod. Somebody is with him."

"Just wait another instant, lad, and they'll be in that patch of moonight by the turning."

But they did not go into that patch of moonlight. Just before they eached it (and the two figures were plain enough now) they turned ack again and took the narrow inlet that led to Oxlip Dell. Whoever it was with Hyde had a hooded cloak on. Was it a red one? Tod laughed.

"Oh, by George, here's fun! He has got Kettie out for a moonlight troll. Let's go and ask them how they enjoy it."

"Hyde might not like us to."

"There you are again, Johnny, with your queer scruples! Stuff and onsense! Stockhausen can't have anything to say to Kettie that all he world may not hear. I want to tell him about to-morrow."

Tod made off across the grass for the inlet, I after him. Yes, there hey were, promenading Oxlip Dell in the flickering light, now in the hade, now in the brightest of the moonbeams; Hyde's arm hugging er red cloak.

Tod gave a grunt of displeasure. "Stockhausen must be doing for pastime," he said; "but he ought not to be so thoughtless. Ketira the gipsy would give the girl a shaking if she knew: she——"

The words came to an abrupt ending. There stood Ketira herelf.

She was at the extreme end of the inlet amid the trees, holding on by he trunk of one, round which her head was cautiously pushed to view he promenaders. Comparatively speaking, it was dark just here; but could see the strangely-wild look in the gipsy's eyes: the woe-begone xpression of her remarkable face.

"It is coming," she said, apparently in answer to Tod's remarks, which she could not have failed to hear. "It is coming quickly."

"What is coming?" I asked.

"The fate in store for her. And it's worse than death."

"If you don't like her to walk out by moonlight, why not keep her n?—not that there can be any harm in it," interposed Tod. "If you lon't approve of her being friendly with Hyde Stockhausen," he went n after a pause, for Ketira made no answer, "why don't you put a top to it?"

"Because she has her mother's spirit and her mother's *will*," cried Ketira. "And she likes to have her own way: and I fear, woe's me! hat if I forced her to mine, things might become worse than they are ven now: that she might take some fatal step."

"I am going home," said Tod at this juncture, perhaps fancying the natter was getting complicated: and, of all things, he hated compli-

cations. "Good night, old lady. We heard you were in bed with rheumatism."

He set off back, up the narrow inlet. I said I'd catch him up: and stayed behind for a last word with Ketira.

"What did you mean by a fatal step?"

"That she might leave me and seek the protection of the Tribe. We have had words about this. Kettie says little, but I see the signs of determination in her silent face. 'I will not have you meet or speak to that man,' I said to her this morning—for she was out with him last evening also. She made me no reply: but—you see—how she has obeyed! Her heart's life has been awakened, and by *him*. There's only one object to whom she clings now in all the whole earth; and that is to him. I am nothing."

"He will not bring any great harm upon her: you need not fear that of Hyde Stockhausen."

"Did I say he would?" she answered fiercely, her black eyes glaring and gleaming. "But he will bring *sorrow* on her and rend her heart-strings. A man's fancies are light as the summer wind, fickle as the ocean waves: but when a woman loves it is for life; sometimes for death."

Hyde and Kettie had disappeared at the upper end of the dell, taking the way that in a minute or two would bring them out in the open fields. Ketira turned back along the narrow path, and I with her.

"I knew he would bring some ill upon me, that first moment when I saw him on Worcester race-ground," resumed Ketira in a low tone of pain. "Instinct warned me that he was an enemy. And what ill can be like that of stealing my young child's heart! Once a girl's heart is taken—and taken but to be toyed with, to be flung back at will—her day-dreams in this life are over."

Emerging into the open ground, the first thing we saw was the pair of lovers about to part. They were standing face to face: Hyde held both her hands while speaking his last words, and then bent suddenly down, as if to whisper them. Ketira gave a sharp cry at that, perhaps she fancied he was stealing a kiss, and lifted her right hand menacingly. The girl ran swiftly in the direction of her home—which was not far off—and Hyde strode, not much less quickly, towards his. Ketira stood as still as a stone image, watching him till he disappeared within his gate.

"There's no harm in it," I persuasively said, sorry to see her so full of trouble. But she was as one who heard not.

"No harm at all, Ketira. I dare answer for it that a score of lads and lasses are out. Why should we not walk in the moonlight as well as the sunlight? For my part, I should call it a shame to stay indoors on this glorious night."

"An enemy, an enemy! A grand gentleman, who will leave her to pine her heart away! What kind of man is he, that Hyde Stockhausen?" she continued, turning to me fiercely.

"Kind of man? A pleasant one. I have not heard any ill of him?"

"Rich?"

"No. Perhaps he will be rich sometime. He makes bricks, you know, now. That is, he superintends the men."

"Yes, I know," she answered: and I don't suppose there was much connected with Hyde she did not know. Looking this way, looking that, she at length began to walk, slowly and painfully, towards Hyde's gate. The thought had crossed me—why did she not take Kettie away on one of their long expeditions, if she dreaded him so much. But the rheumatism lay upon her still too heavily.

Flinging open the gate, she went across the garden, not making for the proper entrance, but for a lighted room, whose French-window stood open to the ground. Hyde was there, just sitting down to supper.

"Come in with me," she said, turning her head round to beckon me on.

But I did not choose to go in. It was no affair of mine that I should beard Hyde in his den. Very astonished indeed must he have been, when she glided in at the window, and stood before him. I saw him rise from his chair; I saw the astounded look of old Deborah Preen when she came in with his supper ale in a jug.

What they said to one another, I know not. I did not wish to listen: though it was only natural I should stay to see the play out. Just as natural as it was for Preen to come stealing round through the kidney beans to the front garden, an anxious look on her face.

"What does that old gipsy woman want with the young master, Mr. Ludlow? Is he having his fortune told?"

"I shouldn't wonder. Wish some good genius would tell mine!"

The interview seemed to have been short and sharp. Ketira was coming out again. Hyde followed her to the window. Both were talking at once, and the tail of the dispute reached our ears.

"I repeat to you that you are totally mistaken," Hyde was saying. "I have no 'designs,' as you put it, on your daughter, good or bad; no design whatever. She is perfectly free to go her own way, for me. My good woman, you have no cause to adjure me in that solemn manner. Sacred? 'Under heaven's protection?' Well, so she may be. I hope she is. Why should I wish to hinder it? I don't wish to. I don't intend to. You need not glare so."

Ketira, outside the window now, turned and faced him, her great eyes fixed on him, her hand raised in menace.

"Do not forget that I have warned you, Hyde Stockhausen. By the

Great Power that regulates all things, human and divine, I affirm that I speak the truth. If harm in any shape or of any kind comes to my child, my dear one, my only one, through you, it will cost you more than you would now care to have foretold."

"Bless my heart!" faintly ejaculated old Preen. And she drew away, and backed for shelter into the bean rows.

Ketira brushed against me as she passed, taking no notice whatever; left the garden, and limped away. Hyde saw me swinging through the gate.

"Are you there, Johnny?" he said, coming forward. "Did you hear that old gipsy woman?" And in a few words I told him all about it.

"Such a fuss for nothing!" he exclaimed. "I'm sure I wish no ill to the girl. Kettie's very nice; bright as the day; and I thought no more harm of strolling a bit with her in the moonlight than I should think it if she were my sister."

"But she is not your sister, you see, Hyde. And old Ketira does not like it."

"I'll take precious good care to keep Kettie at arm's length for the future; make you very sure of that," he said, in a short, fractious tone "I don't care to be blamed for nothing. Tell Todhetley I can't spare the time to go fishing to-morrow—wish I could. Good night."

A fine commotion. Church Dykely up in arms. Kettie had disappeared.

About a fortnight had gone on since the above night, during which period Ketira's rheumatism took so obstinate a turn that she had the felicity of keeping her bed. And one morning, upon Duffham's chancing to pay his visit to her before breakfast, for he was passing the hut on his way home from an early patient, he found the gipsy up and dressed, and just as wild as a lioness rampant. Kettie had gone away in the night.

"Where's she gone to?" naturally asked Duffham, leaning on his cane, and watching the poor woman; who was whirling about like one demented, her rheumatism forgotten.

"Ah, where's she gone to?—where?" raved old Ketira. "When I lay down last night, leaving her to put the plates away and to follow me up when she had done it, I dropped asleep at once. All night long I never woke; the pain was easier, all but gone, and I had been wellnigh worn out with it. 'Why, what's the time, Kettie?' I said to her in our own tongue, when I opened my eyes and saw the sun was high. She did not answer, and I supposed she had gone down to get the breakfast. I called, and called; in vain. I began to put my clothes on; and then I found that she had not lain down that night; and—woe's me! she's gone."

Duffham could not make anything of it; it was less in his line than

rheumatism and broken legs. Being sharp-set for his breakfast, he came away, telling Ketira he would see her again by-and-by.

And, shortly afterwards, he chanced to meet her. Coming out on his rounds of visits, he encountered Ketira near Virginia Cottage. She had been making a call on Hyde Stockhausen.

"He baffles me," she said to the doctor: and Duffham thought if ever a woman's face had the expression "baffled" plainly written on it, Ketira's had then. "I don't know what to make of him. His speech is fair: but—there's the instinct lying in my heart."

"Why, you don't suppose, do you, that Mr. Stockhausen has stolen the child?" questioned Duffham, after a good pause of thought.

"And by whom do *you* suppose the child has been stolen, if not by him?" retorted the gipsy.

"Nay," said Duffham, "I should say she has not been stolen at all. It is difficult to steal girls of her age, remember. Last night was fine; the stars were bright as silver: perhaps, tempted by it, she went out a roaming, and you will see her back in the course of the day."

"I suspect him," repeated Ketira, her great black eyes flashing their anger on Hyde's cottage. "He acts cleverly; but, I suspect him."

Drawing her scarlet cloak higher on her shoulders, she bent her steps towards Oxlip Dell. Duffham was turning on his way, when old Abel Crew came up. We called him "Crew," you know, at Church Dykely.

"Are you looking for Kettie?" questioned Duffham.

"I don't know where to look for her," was Abel's answer. "This morning I was out before sunrise searching for rare herbs: the round I took was an unusually large one, but I did not see anything of the child. Ketira suspects that Mr. Stockhausen must know where she is."

"And do you suspect he does?"

"It is a question that I cannot answer, even to my own mind," replied Abel. "That they were sometimes seen talking and walking together, is certain; and, so far, he may be open to suspicion. But, sir, I know nothing else against him, and I cannot think he would wish to hurt her. I am on my way to ask him."

Interested by this time in the drama, Duffham followed Abel to Virginia Cottage. Hyde Stockhausen was in the little den that he made his counting-house, adding up columns of figures in a ledger, and stared considerably upon being thus pounced upon.

"I wonder what next!" he burst forth, turning crusty before Abel had got out half a sentence. "That confounded old gipsy has just been here with her abuse; and now you have come! She has accused me of I know not what all."

"Of spiriting away her daughter," put in Duffham; who was standing back against the shelves.

"But I have not done it," spluttered Hyde, talking too fast for convenience in his passion. "If I had spirited her away, as you call it, here she would be. Where could I spirit her to?—up into the air, or below the ground?"

"That's just the question—where is she?" rejoined Duffham, gently swaying his big cane.

"How should I know where she is?" retorted Hyde. "If I had 'spirited' her away—I must say I like that word!—here she'd be. Do you suppose I have got her in my house?—or down at the brick-kilns?"

Abel, since his first checked sentence, had been standing quietly and thoughtfully, giving his whole attention to Hyde, as if wanting to see what he was made of. For the second time he essayed to speak.

"You see, sir, we do not know that she is not here. We have your word for it; but ——"

"Then you had better look," interrupted Hyde, adding something about "insolence" under his breath. "Search the house. You are welcome to. Mr. Duffham can show you about it; he knows all its turnings and windings."

What could have been in old Abel's thoughts did not appear on the surface; but he left the room with just a word of respectful apology for accepting the offer. Hyde, who had made it at random in his passion, never supposing it would be caught at, threw back his head disdainfully, and sent a contemptuous word after him. But when Duffham moved off in the same direction, he was utterly surprised.

"Are *you* going to search?"

"I thought you meant me to be his pilot," said Duffham, as cool as you please. "There's not much to be seen, I expect, but the chairs and tables."

Any way, Kettie was not to be seen. The house was but a small one, with no surreptitious closets or cupboards, or other hiding-places. All the rooms and passages stood open to the morning sun, and never a suspicious thing was in them.

Hyde had settled to his accounts again when they got back. He did not condescend to turn his head or notice the offenders any way. Abel waited a moment, and then spoke.

"It may seem to you that I have done a discourteous thing in availing myself of your offer, Mr. Stockhausen; if so, I crave your pardon for it. Sir, you cannot imagine how seriously this disappearance of the child is affecting her mother. Let it plead my excuse."

"It cannot excuse your suspicion of me," returned Hyde, pausing for a moment in his adding up.

"In all the ends of this wide earth there lies not elsewhere a shadow of clue to any motive for her departure. At least, none that we can gather. The only ground for thinking of you, sir, is that you and she

have been friendly. For all our sakes, Mr. Stockhausen, I trust that she will be found, and the mystery cleared up."

"Don't you think you had better have the brick-kilns visited—as well as my house?" sarcastically asked Hyde. But Abel, making no rejoinder, save a civil good morning, departed.

"And now I'll go," said Duffham.

"The sooner the better," retorted Hyde, taking a penful of ink and splashing some of it on the floor.

"There's no cause for you to put yourself out, young man."

"I think there is cause," flashed Hyde. "When you can come to my house with such an accusation as this!—and insolently search it!"

"The searching was the result of your own proposal. As to an accusation, none has been made in my hearing. Kettie has mysteriously disappeared, and it is only natural her people should wish to know where she is, and to look for her. You take up the matter in a wrong light, Mr. Hyde."

"I don't know anything of Kettie"—in an injured tone; "I don't want to. It's rather hard to have her vagaries put upon my back."

"Well, you have only to tell them you don't in an honest manner; I daresay they'll believe you. Abel Carew is one of the most reasonable men I ever knew; sensible, too. Try and find the child yourself; help them to do it, if you can see a clue; make common cause with them."

"You would not like to be told that you had 'spirited' somebody away, more than I like it," grumbled Hyde; who, thoroughly put out, was hard to come round. "I'm sure you are as likely to turn kidnapper as I am. It must be a good two weeks since anybody saw me speak to the girl."

"I shall have my patients thinking I am kidnapped if I don't get off to them," cried Duffham. "Mrs. Godfrey's ill, and she is the very essence of impatience. Good day."

Thoroughly at home in the house, Duffham made no ceremony of departing by the back door, it being more convenient for the road he was going. Deborah Preen was washing endive at the pump in the yard. She turned round to address Duffham as he was passing.

"Has the master spoke to you about his throat, sir?"

"No," said Duffham, halting. "What is amiss with his throat?"

"He has been given to sore throats all his life, Dr. Duffham. Many's the time I have had him laid up with them when he was a child. Yesterday he was quite bad with one, sir; and so he is this morning."

"Perhaps that's why he's cross," remarked Duffham.

"Cross! and enough to make him cross!" returned she, taking up the implication warmly. "I ask your pard'n, sir, for speaking so to you; but I'd like to know what gentleman could help being cross when

that yellow gipsy comes to attack him with her slanderous tongue, and say to him, Have you come across to my hut in the night and stole my daughter out of it!"

"You think your master did not go across and commit the theft?"

"I know he did not," was Preen's indignant answer. "He never stirred out of his own home, sir, all last night; he was nursing his throat indoors. At ten o'clock he went to bed, and I took him up a posset after he was in it. Well, sir, I was uneasy, for I don't like these sore throats, and between two and three o'clock I crept into his room and found him sleeping quietly; and I was in again this morning and woke him up with a cup o' tea."

"A pretty good proof that he did not go out," said Duffham.

"He never was as much as out of his bed, sir. The man that sleeps indoors locked up the house last night, and opened it again this morning. Ketira the gipsy would be in gaol if she got her deservings!"

"I wonder where the rest of us would be if we got ours!" quoth Duffham. "I suppose I had better go back and take a look at this throat!"

To see the miserable distress of Ketira that day, and the despair upon her face as she dodged about between Virginia Cottage and the brick-fields, was like a gloomy picture.

"Do you remember telling me once that you feared Kettie might run away to the tribe?" I asked, meeting her on one of these wanderings in the afternoon. "Perhaps that is where she is gone?"

The suggestion seemed to offend her mortally. "Boy, I know better," she said, facing round upon me fiercely. "With the tribe she would be safe, and I at rest. The stars never deceive me."

And, when the sun went down that night and the stars came out, the environs of Virginia Cottage were still haunted by Ketira the gipsy.

I cannot get the rest in.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

TWICE.

Last time but one I saw my darling's face,
The tears were in her eyes, and when she tried
To hide them with a new and touching grace,
Smiling she sighed.

"Good-bye, my love," she said; "Good-bye for aye."
Words that fell strangely on my startled ear;
But still, with soft reproach, I answered "Nay,
What dost thou fear?

"To-morrow I return; till then farewell."
She raised to mine her face so grave and fair
Amid her tears: I kissed them ere they fell,
And left her there.

And never doubt nor warning bade me stay,
And never came a fear my heart to chill;
Gaily, with fond adieux, I rode away,
Nor thought of ill.

But often as I turned me to the place,
Shading sad eyes from light of setting sun
She stood; and thus I saw my darling's face
Last time but one.

But one. Ah! sweet, my love, that other time
I strove to look thro' bitter, blinding tears
Upon thy beauty, withered in the prime
Of early years.

Pale moonbeams falling on a paler brow,
And tranquil closèd eyes that seemed to sleep
The sounder for my agony,—ah! now
'Twas mine to weep.

So standing by her side, and yet alone,
I pressed warm, trembling lips to hers of clay,
And murmured to my darling dead and gone,
"Good-bye for aye."

S. E. G.

THE LAKES OF SAVOIE.

By the Author of "A Night in a Monastery."

"L'APPETIT vient en mangeant," is a homely but not untrue proverb under many of the conditions of life. It is especially true of the lover of Nature, whose hunger and thirst for her beauties increase as he grows more familiar with them. "The eye is never satisfied with seeing."

We return to our early recollections of mountains and valleys, fair streams and smiling pastures; and, like a lover gazing into the eyes of his mistress, ever see in them fresh beauties to enchant.

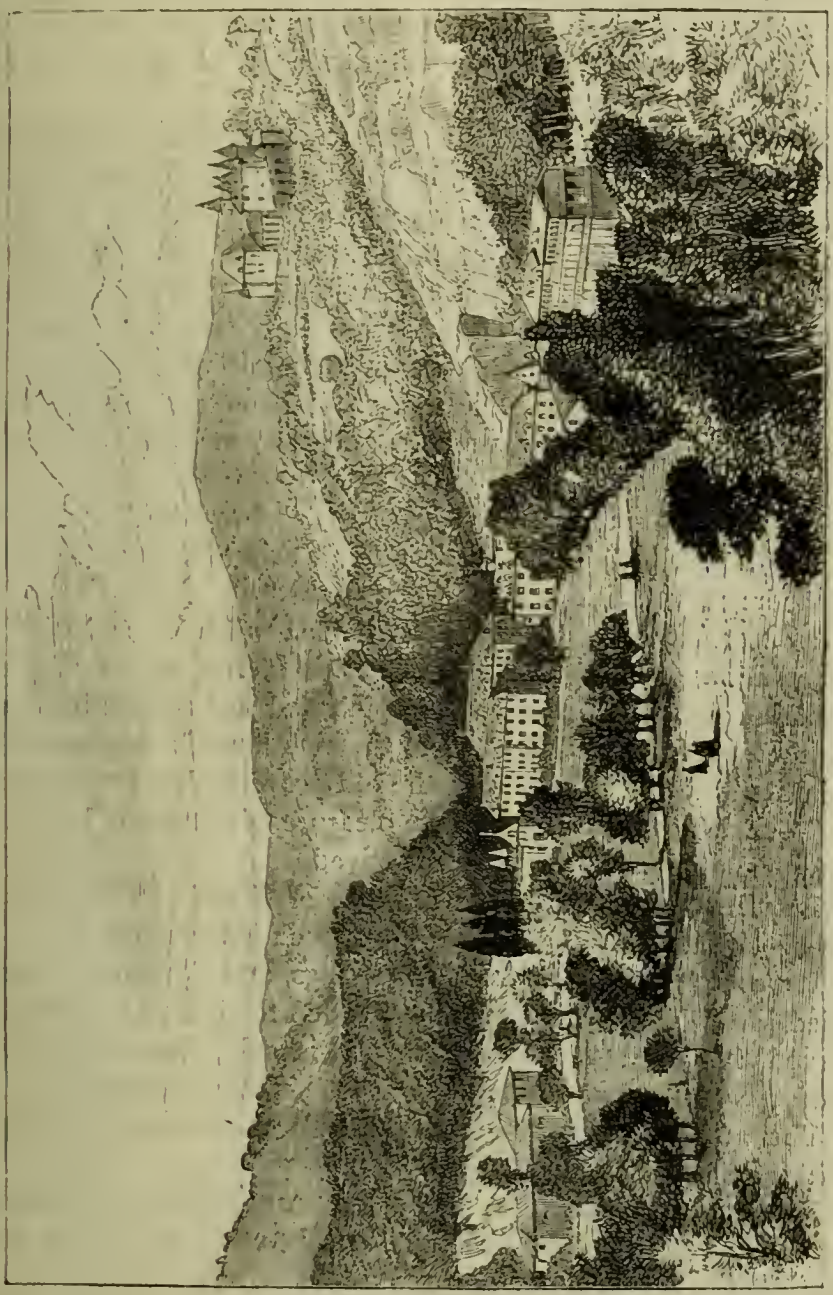
Few, comparatively speaking, who have the opportunity of visiting the lakes of Savoie do so. They know not how much they lose. There are few spots to be found of greater beauty; beauties of every description, and appealing both to the pedestrian and to him who travels more rapidly. Beauties of lake, river, mountain, and plain: scenes alternately sylvan, wooded, smiling, and barren; ancient towns and rustic villages: and again the experiences of desert solitudes. Walks by sunshine, or long excursions by the silver moonlight, tempting you away from the haunts of man into mountainous bypaths, or solitary rows upon a lake, where the spirit may uninterruptedly indulge in its dreams; dreams of romance, imagination, love, ambition, according to its individual temperament: where it may hold communion with itself in a manner which seems to bring it into closer contact with its Divine Creator than any other earthly influence whatsoever: an influence realized only by those in whom the love of Nature is paramount and all powerful.

The reason why few compared with the great mass of travellers visit the lakes of Savoie, or penetrate into its interior, is obvious. It is on the high road to Italy; that land of poetry and painting; of ancient heroes and sparkling music and blue skies: the goal towards which so many hurry, regardless of the flowers which grow by the wayside. These they cannot wait to cull; and much of the most delicate and lasting perfume they would enjoy is lost to them.

Savoie is on the high road to Italy; that is to say, you have to turn aside from the high road to reach it; and it is this turning aside that is so fatal. It is in the immediate vicinity of Switzerland, and of Italy, of places known to fame and frequented by the world of wealth and fashion. But it demands a break in the long direct journey, and some days devoted to itself; an effort few dream of attempting. So the thousands pass on, and Savoie is left to the tens for appreciation: all the more pure and fresh that it is less seen and less spoiled than its

neighbours. Like a violet between a water lily and a full-blown rose —how many would choose the sweet-scented, modest blossom?

We, too, were athirst for "fresh fields and pastures new;" and, these fields and pastures lying amidst glorious snow-capped mountains



URIAGE-LES-BAINS.

whispering of eternity, and calm lakes suggestive of repose, it was a thirst to be gratified if possible. We had been to Allevard, and the wonderful drive to the Monastery of St. Hugon still glowed in our imagination. We had just driven to Uriage-les-Bains: situated at an hour's distance from Grenoble; a constant ascent by the side of a

running stream, amidst the mountains: terminating in the watering-place of which we cannot forbear giving our readers a sketch. The waters of Uriage are famous as a specific for many maladies; and in the season the place is frequented by a gay and fashionable throng; the softer sex never appearing in less than three toilettes a day, unless they wish to be considered as something less than bon ton by their sister invalids, many of whose ailments may be summed up in the one word—ennui.

The season at Uriage had not yet commenced, and we found ourselves in full possession of the place; hotels shut up, and windows barred to the light of day. We left the carriage and roamed amidst the trees and over the grass, which was emerald green, and rich and golden with cowslips and primroses. It was after this drive that, sitting in the long avenue at home, the eye feasted with the beauties around, the ear enchanted with the ceaseless strains of the nightingales, and waiting for the nevertheless welcome tidings, "Madame est servie," M. the Insatiable suddenly put an undertone to the melody that came from the trees.

"Why not go, some day, to Chambéry, and see the Lac du Bourget, and the Palace of the Haute-Combe?" said she. "All who have been there return with glowing descriptions."

Why not, indeed? This shady avenue; whence we looked down upon the happy valley and the silvery river, and across at the great mountains; where we watched the pink and snow-white blossoms fall from the fruit-trees, and listened to the nightingale's song; was delightful in its way: but there was the old proverb about "Toujours perdrix"—and there was always the pleasure of returning home. Such a proposal was not likely to be negatived.

"But the palace of the Haute-Combe?" I said. "What is it, and where?—if this be not confessing too much ignorance?"

"It was the burial place of the Kings and Queens of Sardinia," replied M. "And when Savoie was ceded to France, Victor Emanuel reserved this place to himself: and, it is said, intends himself to be buried there—the last sovereign its walls will ever receive."

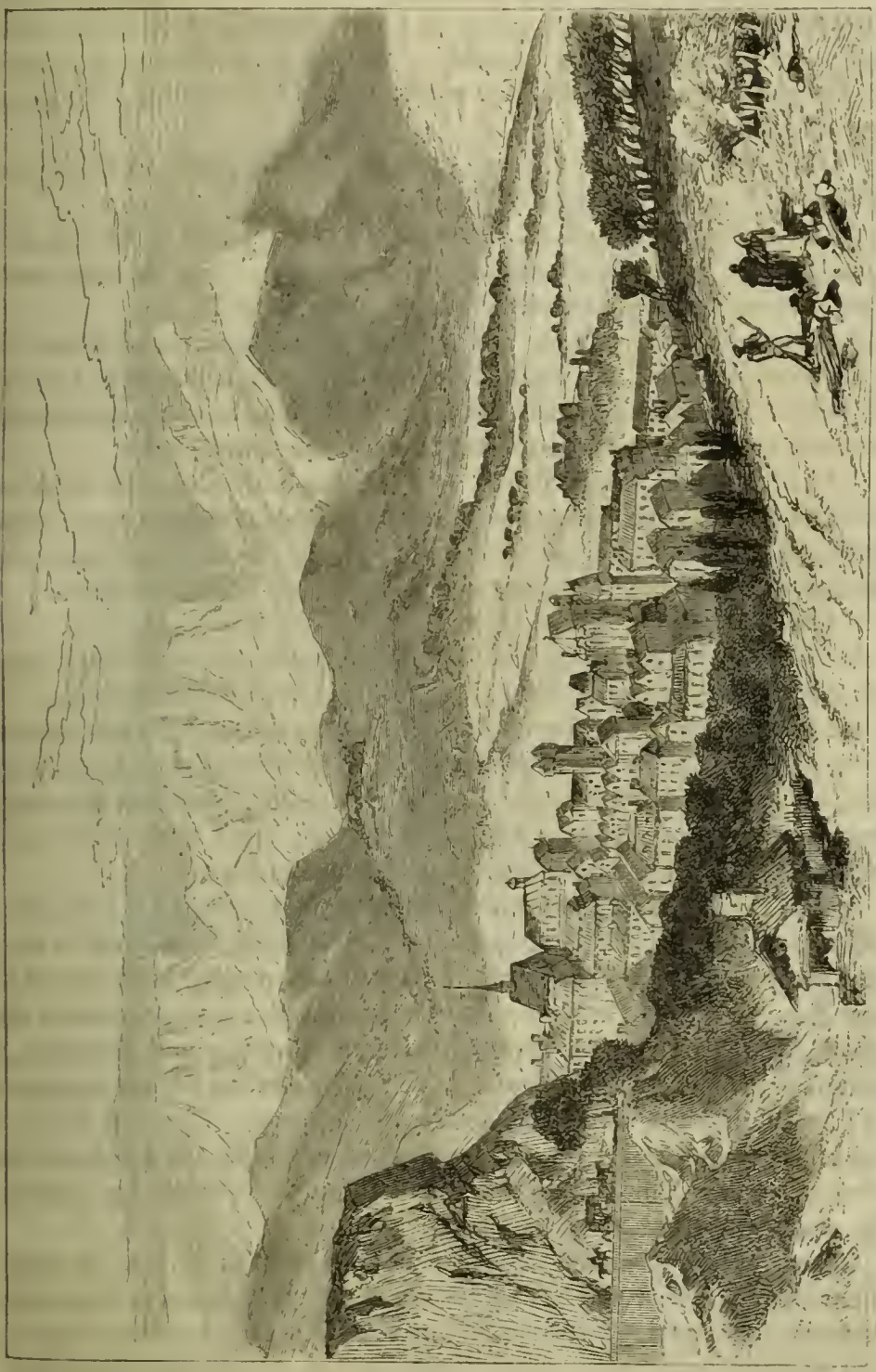
"You are pathetic, ma sœur. And is this palace worth so great trouble?"

"Not only the palace. It is the tout ensemble that is so charming. The journey to Chambéry; the quaint old town; the Lac du Bourget; the excitement of motion; new sensations—and all that."

This was more than enough to tempt even the unwilling: and H., who, like a snail, is often difficult to lure from his shell, volunteered to turn our ordinary tête-à-tête into a trio.

A morning or two later, again at five o'clock, the shutters of my room swung back upon the splendid view. During the night the nightingales more unceasingly than ever had banished sleep; and I had begun to

think—as once before on a similar occasion at Nuremberg—that it is possible to have too much of a good thing. But the chorus had heralded in a morning brilliant and unclouded, and the heart was in-



CHAMBERY IN DAYS GONE BY.

clined to forgiveness. We must have our troubles from one source or another: sometimes even out of our very pleasures.

This morning we did not walk to the train. Punctual to the

moment the carriage came round, and in ten minutes we once more found ourselves at Gières station. There was a three hours' journey in prospective before reaching Chambéry, but the greater part of it lay through very lovely country. In due time we halted at Goncelin—the station for Allevard and St. Hugon. "O that drive!" cried M., clasping her hands dramatically in the excitement of her emotion. "Shall I ever forget it?"

"Do you wish to?" I asked unsentimentally; and received the inevitable "Et tu, Brute!" in rebuke.

"Two children!" cried H. "Scenery's all very well in its way, but I could never go into such insane raptures over it. For my own part, I am missing nothing so much as my morning paper."

Both turned upon him for this speech, and demonstrated clearly as a problem in Euclid that he had neither soul nor sentiment: that all his nerves and emotions had become clouded in tobacco smoke and drowned in cassis—a nauseous but favourite beverage of his.

"Ah!" he cried patronizingly. "Had you been about the world as much as I have; seen sunsets in the tropics and hurricanes at sea: ships foundering and ships' crews in momentary peril of their lives; had you scoured the great prairies of America, and hunted tigers in India——"

"And stuck pigs?" asked M. artlessly.

H. bowed. "Thank you, madam, for the reminder—and stuck pigs: you would have but little enthusiasm left for such scenes as these."

He looked around coldly upon the beautiful valley and grand mountains, and once more bewailed the absence of his paper. For our own part, we doubted his assertion. Beauty must hold its sway all the world over; and it was difficult to imagine a state of mind that could gaze with indifference upon such scenes as the surrounding.

In due time we reached Montmélian, and gazed down the valley that takes you into Italy. If all roads leading to Rome are equal to this, here truly is a Paradise upon earth. Trees and verdure grew around in abundance; ancient bridges with their picturesque arches spanned the broad, flowing river; the mountain side was broken and luxuriant, a church or cottage rising here and there; while the line of rails suggested an idea of life and animation to the whole scene. Over all the sun shed his beams, tipping the trees with gold, sparkling his jewels in the running water. This passed away, and about ten o'clock we reached the quaint old town of Chambéry.

Chambéry was formerly the capital of the Duchy of Savoie. Its origin is enveloped in obscurity. The first mention of the Lords of Chambéry (before its annexation to Savoie) is in 1029. In 1232 the then reigning lord sold the town to the Count of Savoie, who, to propitiate the inhabitants, accorded them various favours and privileges. After this the history of the town underwent many vicissitudes; now passing into the hands of the French, now into that of the Spaniards, and again into that

of Savoie. Finally, by the treaty of 1860, it again became united to France. The Archbishop of Chambéry was made a cardinal, and his red hat hangs over the altar in the Cathedral ; whilst the place where his body rests has been turned into a shrine, where you may find candles burning, and relics hanging, and dévotes telling their beads, at all hours of the day.

The town at once strikes the traveller as being ancient, and curious, and well worth a visit. Not the picturesque antiquity of such a town as Nuremberg, where you do not find any building of to-day to destroy the uniformity of past centuries. Chambéry is in great part modern, but here and there its antiquity peeps out : and you feel yourself in the presence of something that has a history.

We made our way to the Hôtel de la Métropole, which had been recommended to us as the best in the town. If this be so, Chambéry

Les Charmettes.

cannot certainly boast of lodging its guests in luxurious quarters. The host and hostess were an immense couple, the latter bearing away the palm in point of size, though still not rivalling our hostess of the Hôtel du Commerce at Allevard. It was evident, too, in the present instance, that the lady "ruled the roast."

We were speedily informed that our intention of returning home that night must be set aside—that is, if we paid a visit to the Lac du Bourget ; and nothing less than this could be thought of. H., always practical, at once ordered breakfast ; and the landlord sent round for a carriage to convey us, whilst this was preparing, to a spot I had long wished to visit : a spot that had always borne a peculiar charm to me, as it must to all who are interested in the life and works of that unhappy man, Jean Jacques Rousseau—les Charmettes.

In a very few minutes the carriage arrived. But what a conveyance! The fac-simile of the one the man had endeavoured to thrust upon us at Allevard. An old, lumbering cabriolet with a heavy hood to it, and a hard, loose seat that jolted with every movement of the ancient dilapidated horse, as he trotted wearily over the rough, uneven road.

"How could you think of sending for such a vehicle as this?" was asked of the landlord. Mine host, having no reply, abused the driver. The driver, excusing himself, declared he had none other at liberty. There was no time to make a change; every moment was precious; but with an understanding that something better must be provided on our return for the drive to the Lac du Bourget, we started for les Charmettes.

It was not a long drive. In half an hour we had reached our destination; but it would be difficult to imagine a prettier or more picturesque scene. The road, winding by the hill-side, took us through a wealth of verdure, which grew in wild profusion; a stream rippled beside us; wild flowers grew upon the banks—just as Rousseau described their groiwng a hundred and fifty years ago. The road itself, rough and uneven, threatened to shake the heavy vehicle to pieces; and H. and M. preferred walking to being pounded to jelly. At length we stopped, and looking upwards saw a small stone house upon the hill-side. It was les Charmettes. A short ascent and we stood in front of it. Certainly nothing could be more lovely and picturesque, more secluded, than this spot; and nothing could be more comfortless than the house. But in the early days of the last century people were less luxurious and refined than they are now; and it is quite possible to imagine that Rousseau and his companion—Madame de Warens—found, in this rude, stone-paved retreat, the happiness he paints in such vivid colours.

It seems to be very much in the state in which they left it. First we entered upon a bare room which served as their kitchen. It is now unfurnished and unoccupied. Next we passed into a room, stone-paved, that had been their dining-room. It contained nothing but a common wooden table and two or three chairs. On the walls hung a few paintings: one of Rousseau himself, another of Madame de Warens, representing her as a woman of beauty. Beyond this was their drawing-room. In one corner stood an old spinnet, on which Rousseau was wont to beguile the hours with his soft, sweet extemporising. A few chords, struck, awoke, dismal echoes that sounded like ghosts of his departed music. Nearly a hundred and fifty years since those walls had vibrated with his thoughts! How does he himself describe the spot:—

"Between two hills lies a small valley running north and south, at the bottom of which a brook ripples amidst trees and stones. Here and there down this valley, perched on the hill-side, you perceive a

solitary house, forming an agreeable residence to those who love a wild and isolated retreat. . . . Our house was pleasant and convenient. Before it was a garden laid out in terraces; a vineyard above, an orchard below: immediately opposite, a small plantation of chestnuts, and close beside us a fountain: higher up in the mountains pasture for our cattle: in fact, every necessary requisite to our country life. As far as I can remember we took possession of it towards the end of the summer of 1736. I was enchanted with it the very first night of our arrival." (Rousseau's "Confessions.")

The interior of the house is altogether rude and unpolished. The short stone staircase, leading to the one floor above, is tolerably worn. The floor contains three rooms. One was Rousseau's bedroom; the next that of Madame de Warens; and a third occupied doubtless by a servant. The inspection of the whole place required not many minutes. But its charm consisted in being able to realize his descriptions; in carrying oneself back a century and a half to the days when his voice and his music haunted the place, and his pen wrote down those thoughts which were to make him immortal.

Passing from the house on to the terrace, we gazed upon the outward scene Rousseau so much delighted in. There were the vineyards, the flower gardens, the grove of trees; there was his arbour, and no doubt his bees were not far off—or their descendants. The height to our left concealed the exquisite view below; and the town of Chambéry reposing in its lovely and fertile valley; and the far-off hills towering beyond, with their rough ridges and their snow-peaks.

But here, too, the chief interest lay in imagining the scene as it was one hundred and fifty years ago; in fancying that Rousseau's spirit was still hovering about the spot. To ponder over the life of this remarkable, but strange and unhappy man; constantly battling with the good and evil within him, and ever allowing the latter to predominate. Unhappy in the very possession and consciousness of his genius, to which he was so often untrue, and by which he was raised above the sympathies and companionship of his fellow-men.

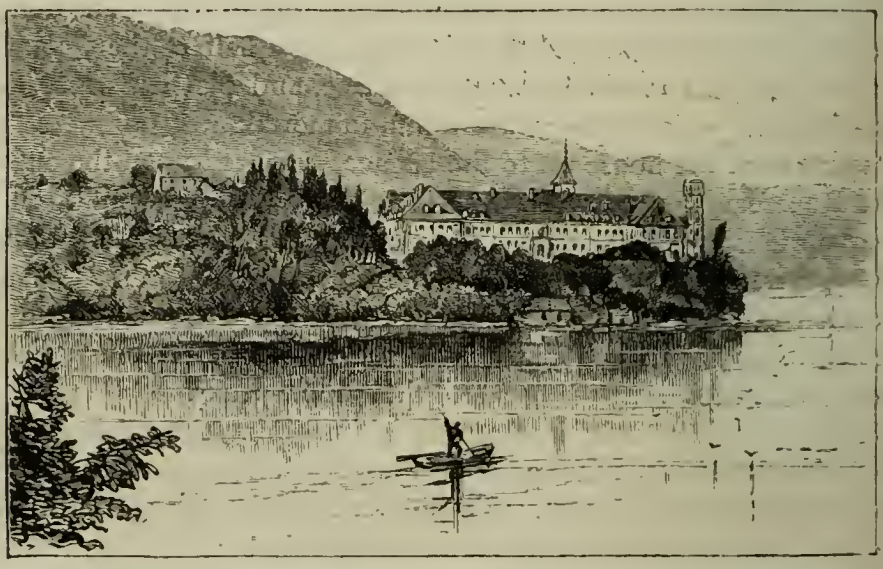
Yet he has somehow left a charm behind him which does not die; nay, which seems to increase with time; and nothing could exceed the dreamy, melancholy pleasure of gazing upon his old familiar and much-loved haunts. "What is Chambéry without Rousseau?" says Lamartine, in his "Raphael." "The man not only animates his fellow-men: he gives life to all Nature. He carries with him an immortality to Heaven, and leaves one upon earth, in those spots that he has consecrated by his presence."

We lingered until the last moment. M. begged a flower from the deaf and dumb gardener, who was at work in the garden; and he, seeming to have fallen in love with her, threatened to strip his beds, as a mute offering of his adoration. At length H. declared he would

stay no longer. The beauties of Nature were all very well; but what would compensate for an overdone breakfast? So, bidding adieu to les Charmettes and the shades of Rousseau, we once more mounted the nondescript, but decidedly uncomfortable, vehicle. Gradually winding down the valley, we at length found ourselves once more at the hotel.

The Cathedral was opposite its windows. An ugly building, of no particular style of architecture, its interior decorations of the florid Italian school, conspicuous by an absence of taste. We listened for a few moments to the sweet tones of the organ, which was then being played, and then went back to breakfast.

It was ready, and H. impatient. Our host waited upon us himself, whilst his decidedly better half could be heard in the distance, in loud



ABBEY OF THE HAUTE-COMBE.

commanding tones ordering her people hither and thither. Of a surety that woman was not loved by her domestics.

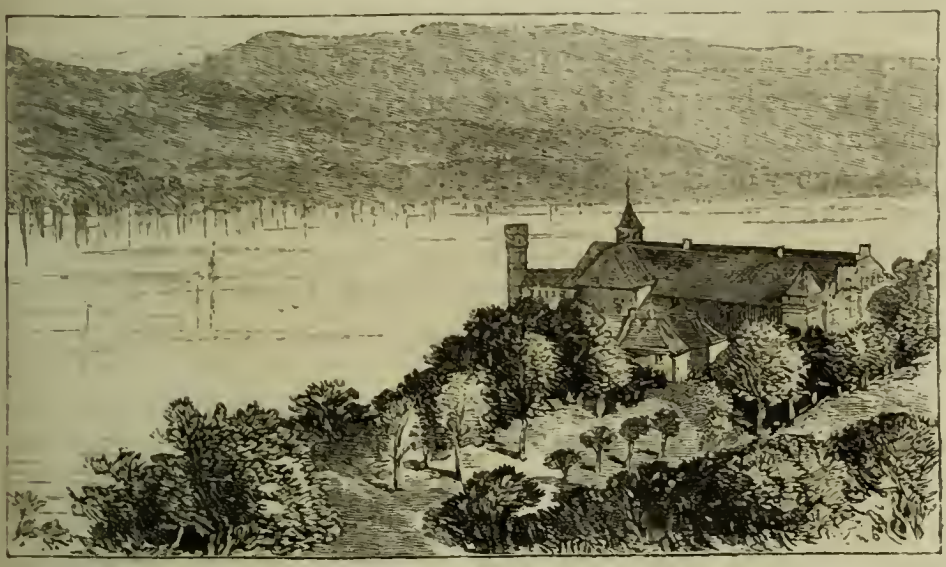
As soon as breakfast was ended, a basket carriage was driven up to the door by our late Jehu. Evidently with him necessity was the mother of invention. This, at any rate, was an improvement upon the two-wheeled ramshackle cabriolet.

The drive to the Lac du Bourget was less picturesque than we had been led to anticipate by our hostess. A long, straight road, which seemed to have neither ending nor turning. On either side the road a ditch holding muddy water. To our right hand the railroad. On both sides the mountains, but at a considerable distance: the plain or valley between lacking the richness, luxuriance, and variety of the valleys we had lately traversed. Where so much that is beautiful has to be described, it is a relief for a moment to record the opposite. Yet we

would not linger over it; though it was the only bit of scenery that did not raise us to enthusiasm.

After a drive of an hour and a half we passed through a small village, and a few minutes later reached the lake. The carriage was now quitted for a boat, which, in the hands of two strong boatmen, quickly skimmed the water.

It was a delicious afternoon. The sun was shining, but not too powerfully. White clouds floated gently across the sky, and threw their shadows upon the smooth water and the surrounding heights. The abbey lay at the further end of the lake, and a long row was before us. The lake itself is between ten and twelve miles long, between three and four miles wide, and from three to four hundred feet deep. To our left hand the mountains rose steep and towering, wild-looking and barren.



LAC DU BOURGET.

Here, upon a jutting rock, high up, some one had built himself a castle that seemed impregnable. To our right was a long stretch of mountains. There, in a decline, was Aix-les-Bains, so resorted to, during the summer season, for its waters. Far away, a long white line in the mountain side, was the steam from a train, puffing its way to the fair shores of Geneva. This was one of Lamartine's favourite spots, and here Rousseau wrote some of the most celebrated passages in "Emile."

The Lac du Bourget is celebrated for its desolate and somewhat wild aspect: to luxuriance of vegetation it can lay no claim. Barren mountain sides, and seemingly inaccessible heights, where the eagles love to build their nests safe from intrusion. Here and there wild birds skimmed the water, or flew screaming far away beyond the mountains. We were close under the left bank of the lake. The right bank in the distance was of kinder and more genial aspect. The outlines of the mountains

were more undulating, and sloped gently to the water's edge: opening out to view, further on, was another grand mountain chain.

The choice that had fixed upon this spot for a sepulchre was to be admired. Rowing as we were, our faces turned to the left bank, there was something excessively funereal and solemn in the aspect of the lake and mountains. With the sun full upon it, the blue of the water rivalled the blue of the sky: but presently, when a bank of clouds rose up and overshadowed the lake, its waters turned to a cold, sombre, treacherous green, suggestive of cruel depths.

After a row of some distance we rounded a point, and came in sight of the abbey, built upon a strip of land jutting out upon the lake. Trees and shrubs grew about the building, and agreeably relieved the barrenness of the mountain which sloped behind it. Beyond this again other mountains stretched themselves.

It was impossible to near the abbey without being struck by its beauty and the whiteness of its stone, which reflected itself upon the smooth waters beneath. We soon landed, and began to wind up the path that led to it.

The Abbey of Haute-Combe is the burial place of the Princes of Savoie, the Kings of Sardinia. To the chapel royal a palace is attached, where they were wont to stay occasionally in the old days. At such times visitors were not permitted to inspect the apartments, and anything more quiet, retired, and desolate could not well be imagined.

The abbey was founded by St. Bernard in the year 1125, and from that date became the sepulchre of the Princes of Savoie. In 1792, when the French entered Savoie, it was sold by the French Government to some people who turned the church into a manufactory of porcelain. In 1824, Charles Felix repurchased the ruins, and had the abbey restored according to its original designs; but the work was completed only twelve years after his death by his widow, Marie Christine. The chef d'œuvre of the chapel is a group in white Carrara marble, exquisitely chiselled by Albertoni, representing the queen protecting Art (in the form of a child whom her left arm encircles), whilst with her right hand she drops a piece of money into the hands of a youthful mendicant.

Since its restoration, the abbey has been occupied by monks of St. Bernard, whose mission is to guard the ashes, and to pray for the souls, of the dead and gone Princes of the House of Savoie.

We can imagine a funeral procession as it must have taken place whenever a prince died. The coffin borne in silence on its barque, followed by a long train of mourners in their boats, the oars silently and regularly cutting the water. Perhaps twilight would be deepening, throwing its weird gloom over an already gloomy and solemn scene: mysteriously concealing the crevices of the mountain sides, throwing its

shadows upon the dark water, changing the sunny blue of mid-day into the blackness of night. After a long row, during which no word had been spoken, no sound uttered: save the shrill scream of a night bird, hovering far above the mysterious progress, and wondering who went there disturbing its solitude: the landing-place was reached; the oars were shipped; the heavy burden, precious to its bearers, was lifted on men's shoulders; a long train of mourners began to ascend the steep, winding path, and the body was carried to its last resting-place. So it has been many a time. So, if report be true, it is to be yet once again.

The abbey and its adjoining apartments; those inhabited in the old days by the Royal Family and now kept up for show; are worth a visit. The chapel is decorated in the florid style, tastefully carried out. The light is subdued by stained windows, which throw a glow over its monuments and pavement. As we entered, at the far end a monk was playing a harmonium, and its sweet sounds vibrated pleasantly through the arches, and seemed wonderfully to harmonize with the tone and colour of the interior. Another monk, in a large brown flannel cloak and capuchin, conducted us over the chapel, and very politely and kindly pointed out the various objects of interest. After that we visited the Royal apartments, and stood for some time enraptured at the beautiful view from its windows: a view of which the accompanying sketch can give but a faint idea.

But time was passing rapidly. We had a long row and a long drive before us, ere reaching Chambéry. We were soon again on the water, and the row back was almost pleasanter than it had been thitherwards. In due time we landed again, and at the end of our drive were not sorry towards eight o'clock to sit down to dinner. That important daily event over, we strolled for a time under the arcades and about the old town of Chambéry, admiring some of its ancient houses as they stood out beneath the pale moonlight. Above all, the old palace and chapel royal; but the glory of the one has departed, and the other has long since been turned to civil uses.

"Now that we are here," suggested M., "we may as well to-morrow visit Annecy and its beautiful lake, before returning home."

H. could not quite see it. He did not care for so much running about. "I decidedly vote for returning home," said he. "At any rate, I mean to do so myself. If you two care to go on to Annecy without me, you are welcome to do so."

The matter was thus settled.

Later on, upon asking for bed candles, an amusing scene took place between the landlady and one of the waiters; but it is much feared its point will be utterly lost without the presence and action of the worthy hostess.

Picture to yourself a mountain of a woman, with the gruff voice of a man, and something of his beard. With every sentence she uttered

her frame rose an inch; her bearing resembled that of a tragedy queen in her most tragic moments.

"Jules!" called out Madame, in such tones as might have waked the cardinal in his tomb over the way: "Jules! come here!"

Jules appeared. Jules evidently hated Madame cordially, and was prepared to be civilly insolent.

"Oui, Madame?"

"Where is the garçon-de-chambre?"

"I don't know, Madame."

"Call him."

"I have called him twenty times. I have no voice left. My throat is sore. If Madame had any humanity, she would give me something soothing to drink."

"No arguments! CHERCHEZ-LE!"

One hand was theatrically raised and pointed to the door; the other flourished upwards at the back of her head; her attitude was almost that of one about to commence fencing; the body was thrown back; the command was uttered in large capitals. "Mount Vesuvius in a state of eruption," whispered M. The simile was excellent.

The man disappeared, and in five minutes returned.

"I have found him at last, Madame. He had gone over the way to the Cathedral, to spend half an hour there at his prayers."

This of course was anything but the truth. The garçon had gone off to a café to have a game at billiards or dominoes; but the man did not wait the result of his impudence. The words uttered, he disappeared like lightning, deaf to Madame's stentorian "ARRETEZ."

The garçon-de-chambre now made his appearance, and with lights and ceremony we were marshalled up the rickety old staircase to our respective apartments.

CHARLES W. WOOD.

ONE DAY IN A SETTLER'S LIFE.

"IF you had had a grain of real love for me, you never would have dragged me out into this desolate wilderness," said Mrs. Roland Hardy, half sobbing, and really angry.

She arose, and flashed round to the window; there pressing her hot face so closely against the pane that her nose immediately began melting a grotesque pattern of herself in the sparkling frostwork. "Had you been a gentleman, Roland, you never would have thought of doing it."

When wives get into a passion they are apt to say things that they may hereafter bitterly regret. Mrs. Hardy was no exception. Her husband stood breathlessly silent, his face paling. They had not been married a year yet.

"Jane," he answered at last, in tones hard and cold, "if I had not thought you were willing, ay, and more than willing, to risk it, I should never have brought you, and you know it. Remember, I told you it would be a rough life; yet you were eager to come."

Jane Hardy remembered very well. But the memory of her ardent protestations, her generous forgetfulness of self, only angered her the more just now.

"How was I to know it would be like *this?* There! You can go if you are going. I should like to be alone—with all this work to do."

"I am going directly," was Mr. Hardy's answer, striving for tranquillity. "Will you be good enough to put up my luncheon? I shall not come back until night."

"Oh dear, yes," she replied with alacrity, bringing her face away from the window with a jerk; and proceeding to make a great clatter in the cupboard, which in this pioneer cabin was a combination of pantry and china closet.

"I fear there is but a short allowance of wood: will it last till evening?" asked Mr. Hardy, dubiously looking at the wood-box he had just replenished, and turning to brush up the bits of bark that had fallen on the neat rug-carpet. His words were kind, but his tone was as chilly as an icicle.

"There is plenty; do not trouble yourself," responded his wife resentfully, her eyes bent on the bread she was buttering.

In five minutes, man, dinner-pail, axe, and dog had vanished in the direction of the great forest; and the young wife was alone, as she had vehemently desired to be. Roland Hardy had gone forth to his day's work of felling timber.

Most young and angry wives would have burst into tears at this point.

Jane Hardy did not. She leaned against the rude mantel-shelf when her husband's footsteps no longer sounded in the crisp snow, and looked unutterably sad and hopeless, as if the light of her life had suddenly gone out; looked remorseful, too, as if conscious of having had something to do with its annihilation.

The story is one of those often enough enacted in the New World. Certain expectations suddenly failing him, Roland Hardy manfully resolved to betake himself to the mighty woods, clear out a settlement for himself, erect his own house, Robinson Crusoe fashion: and in time, by dint of his hands' hard labour, become prosperous. Hardy, the settler, he would be then, with his farm lands around him, his flocks and herds, his people and his comforts. But all that would have to be patiently worked on for, and the beginning must, of necessity, be weary and toilsome. Jane Deane, to whom he was engaged, decided to go out with him: his wife. He told her he had better go on first, say for a year or two; her friends urged the same advice; but the young lady would not listen. So far as he was able, Mr. Hardy, before the marriage, described what their toil and their lonely life would be Jane Deane looked at it with rose-coloured spectacles, and thought it would be charming, a kind of perpetual picnic. It is true she did not bargain for the help they had taken with them, in the shape of a man and a woman servant, deserting them speedily, tired with the new rough work, sick at the loneliness; and those engaged in their places (after endless trouble and long negotiation) had not yet come. But she had put her own shoulder bravely to the wheel in the summer weather, and made light of hardships. It was winter now. And for the first time her temper had given way.

Everything seemed to have gone wrong in the cabin that morning; and her husband's calm cheerfulness through it all had provoked her most unwarrantably. But she was not feeling well.

It is possible that many of us have such mornings—mornings when everything animate, and inanimate, conspires to bring to the surface the original gorilla that slumbers within the soul. These vexations have to be beaten down promptly under one's feet, and Mrs. Hardy had stooped to squabble with hers. A dear little rose had been discovered frozen, though wrapped in flannel and placed in the warmest corner of the burrow under the floor, called, as a matter of dignity, the cellar. To be sure, the potatoes had been kindly spared: but what were gross potatoes when lovely Lamarque buds drooped in death? Mourning over them, Mrs. Hardy forgot the milk-toast, and the milk-toast indignantly boiled over. Catching the pan from the stove, lo! a splash of hot milk fell on the front breadth of her clean crisp French gingham, and another on the ear of poor David, stretched on the hearth, and the dog howléd responsively. At another time Jane would have laughed; but laughing was very far from her mood this morning; life in general was

looking depressedly gloomy; and when Mr. Hardy came into this atmosphere of burnt milk and piteous dog-whinings, she was declaring, in her fervid way, that housekeeping out west was simply villainous, and that she hated it—here she caught his provokingly smiling eyes—yes; hated it, and him, and the place, and everything.

He met the words jokingly, and it incensed her. In her angry spirit she said unforgivable things, and Mr. Hardy was provoked into retorting. So they jarred and jangled through breakfast. That is, *she* did.

For some little time Roland Hardy had feared that a sort of suppressed discontent was taking possession of his wife. She was quieter at times, almost sad, and less given to laughter than in their old bright days, as he had got to calling them. He had hoped everything of her love and devotion—hoped that he might ever remain as near and dear, as much "all the world" to her as she had often declared him to be. And now this had come of it; this dreadful quarrel. She had spoken out her mind.

His heart was aching with her reproaches; but, generous ever, he excused her to himself as he walked along to the woods. It was asking too much of mortal woman, he argued, anxious to make himself wretched, to tear her far away from home, and friends, and all the comfortable delights of well-regulated New England life, and to expect her to be always glad, and buoyant, and brave, and hopeful, keeping his own soul up with the wine-like tonic of her blithe spirits. No. It was the same old beginning of the end, a mere question of time. Eventually she would become the indifferent, matter-of-fact sort of woman that most wives appeared to be; regarding him—the lover—as a kind of mild, inevitable evil, necessary to her support, and respectable to have about the home. Sooner or later, he supposed, all husbands and wives awoke from their dream of love, to the long, dreary reality of making the best of things. Nevertheless, her fierce outburst on this particular morning took him by surprise; somewhat aroused his indignation. Had it not been her free choice to enter on this "villainous" housekeeping? Had he not warned her freely and fully that her days, if she came with him, would be anything but a bed of roses? Was not life harder for him, inexpressibly harder, than it had ever been, a totally different thing altogether; but he bore on perseveringly and untiringly, looking to the end in view, and making matters light for her sake. Suppose—suppose—a flush dyed the young man's patient face as the thought occurred to him—suppose she refused to stay here and went home to her friends?

Meanwhile, Mrs. Hardy stood on by the mantelpiece, horribly miserable—more miserable than she had ever dreamed of being in any of the love-quarrels that had flickered their courtship. There seemed to be no "making-up" in this sort of thing; there was no light in it:

it was unmitigated, hopeless wretchedness. For Mrs. Jane Hardy, her passion over, was chewing the husks of bitter repentance. He did not love her any more; he could not; or he never would have said harsh things to her; and this was the end of it all!

"To call me 'Jane'!" she exclaimed aloud, as if the word "Jane" contained all forms of vituperation. "Nobody has been cruel enough to call me that in all my life!" turning to the breakfast dishes with a bravely-conquered sob. For this young lady, who had been a pet at home, had never been called by her husband, or by anybody else, by a harder name than Jenny.

Work is so good a thing! Auerbach says it should have been the first commandment: "Thou shalt work!" Jenny was too unfamiliar with heart-torture to be conscious of how good her work was: but she could not but be aware, as the morning passed away, that something was driving the clouds out of her sky. Roland could not despise her all at once, she was sure. She would gather up the remnant of his love, and guard and nourish it so tenderly that, like her poor Lamarque rose, it must still lift itself to the sun again, and some time blossom into a little beauty of sweetness, and so make life endurable. She would, in so many noble and heroic ways, prove to him—but no; how could she do that?—there was nothing noble or heroic to do. Women's lives—ordinary women's lives, like hers—had no heroic chances. She could only keep his house in nice order, cook his favourite dishes, watch over his shirt-buttons, forget the old days of ease when she was a listless young lady, and never, never, never lose her temper again. It was all dreadfully commonplace, and of no account, but she had embraced this lot of her own free will, and out of her deep love for him, and it was the only way by which she could hope to climb to the heights of his regard again. As for his old romantic love for her, his tender chivalrous devotion, that could never come back; she wasn't worth it. And so, accepting the dust of humiliation, and, like a genuine woman, having no mercy on herself, she went through the household duties, thinking all the time how dear to her were husband and home, and how she would strive to made herself endurable, please God, to them.

It was a decidedly pleasant log-cabin. Log-cabins are always pleasant when an apt housekeeper presides over them, and enough of the world's lucre can be afforded to cover the walls with tasteful paper, and the floor with comfortable carpets. Those rude logs, of which we read, with their thatched roofs, clay floors, and chimneys built of sticks, are far more endurable on canvas and in the rhymes of young poets, than in actual life, where they mean simply rheumatism and insects. This house was different; it was a spacious, comfortable, well-furnished place; and only called a log-cabin after the custom of the country.

A staunch roof; substantial walls, ornamental within; carpet, books, pictures, a rare clock, easy chairs: everything for comfort

met the eye. The sleeping rooms above gave evidence of ingenious and tasteful powers brought to bear upon their building and furnishing. Charming expedients, graceful rustic ornamentations, pretty and useful things that cost little, made the cabin seem very much of a cosy mansion in a small way. In the midst of an almost savage wilderness, Roland Hardy had erected his dwelling with a view rather to future exigencies than present needs; and he and his wife both possessed the gift of "making the most of things."

And it is surprising how deftly in these remote homes a woman, though she may have been gently born and reared, soon learns to accomplish the needful daily work. Where there's a will there's a way; and Jane Hardy had learnt to take a pleasure and a pride in it.

By noon to-day the work was done, and the house in the trimmest order. White loaves, just from the oven, were diffusing their fresh yeasty fragrance; the week's ironing hung warm and spotless across the clothes-horse. On the table smoked an exceedingly lonesome cup of tea; and over it leaned the pensive young housekeeper, pretending to do justice to her solitary luncheon

Her thoughts were away in the snowy woodland with him, her husband; who was doubtless, about this time, eating prairie-chicken and clammy bread-and-butter. "He might build a fire, and give it a little roast on a stick," she pensively murmured; and then she felt how very glad she should be when night should come, and she could, in many furtive ways, confess to him how sorry she was, how deeply in need of his dear love.

It was nearly three o'clock when, mechanically looking through the window in the direction of the forest, she was surprised to see the dog, David, making for the house in a wavering, uncertain way, as if he had half a mind to turn back to the woods. David had more than once wearied of the monotony of watching wood-chopping, and come to the house an hour or two in advance of his master; so there was nothing startling in his coming now. He scratched at the door in his usual obsequious fashion; darted to devour, when admitted, a morsel of bread and meat; but, quitting it instantaneously, went and sat down before his mistress with the air of having something to say, and began to whine.

David was not a remarkable dog: not at all any dog in particular. He was yellow and undersized, with only a white spot on his forehead by way of ornament; and he was inclined to be lazy. He had come to them one stormy night, a lame, starving vagrant from some emigrant train, and kind-hearted Roland fed him, put liniment on his leg, and called him David, after a faithful dog he had recently possessed, and lost. And David contentedly remained, exhibiting no marked talent for anything, and sometimes betraying a lack of decent intelligence. His mental faculties had been dwarfed by persistent ill-treatment, Mr.

Hardy thought; the dog seemed to be *cowed*. One peculiarity of his was, that he never asked for food. He was the most unobtrusive, retiring sort of animal that ever yearned for cold meat. If meat came to him, well and good; but he never uttered a whine, or gave one beggarly wag of his tail to indicate that he was hungry. He would not have done it if he were starving. Jenny was wont to say that he was poor, but proud. So to-day, when he planted himself before his mistress, and looked at her with all the soul he had in his eyes, and whined like a professional beggar, he was regarded with a good deal of astonishment.

"More dinner, David? Is it possible you have brought yourself to ask for more dinner?"—going to the cupboard and carving a bone for him.

David looked hurt. Nevertheless, he took the bone gently, carried it to his rug in the corner, and left it. That caused Mrs. Hardy to look at the rug, which she had not done before; and then she saw that he had not eaten his dinner. The dog returned to his old position, whining before her as she sat.

"Oh, it is water, then!"

No, it was not water. He retreated from the basin with an air of increased injured feeling, and continued to regard his mistress with appealing eyes. All at once some instinct penetrated to Jenny's mind, and her heart gave a great leap of fear.

"David! David! Is it your master? Is it Roland?"

The dog made a bounce of joyous relief, as if glad of being understood at last, and trotted to the door, casting a look back at her over his shoulder. If ever a look said plainly, Come on, that look did.

"I will come, old fellow," said Jenny, going to the wardrobe, and hurriedly getting out some wraps and her fur-lined overshoes. "Something is the matter with the dog, and it may be that. At any rate, there will be no harm in my running out to the woods," she added, with a nervous little laugh. "Roland need not know how silly I am: I can say that I wanted to find lichens."

The sun was disappearing behind a cold, hazy horizon; a chilly wind whirled the snow-clouds across the level plain, ferreted out the fallen leaves, that strove to hide from it, and sent them scudding on again. The still radiance of the winter day was giving place to an early and boisterous night; to such a night that will not be forgotten in that country by living man or woman.

In her staunch overshoes, short cloth skirt, and shaggy walking-jacket, a costume in which she had tramped many a time with her husband on expeditions to the distant post-office, where a blacksmith's shop and a grocery store had put their heads together and declared themselves a city, Mrs. Hardy prepared to start. But she first of all unlocked a small store chest, and excavated from its depths a sealed

bottle, with "Catawba Grape" written in homely chirography on its deliciously dingy label.

"My dear old father!" she exclaimed, by no means addressing herself to the bottle; but, with dim eyes, thinking of the kind hands that were young hands when they made this wine; which, from its age and strength, was, as a cordial, equal to brandy. The hands were old hands now; capable of little but writing her shaky letters from the dear old homestead. "Who knows but Roland may be past its aid; that some dreadful accident—but I won't think of it. And who knows but I may meet him trudging homewards; and he will ask me what on earth I have brought out the wine for? But he shan't see it: I will not show it: and to-morrow I shall laugh at myself for these foolish fears."

Talking thus incoherently, but doubtless thinking connectedly enough, she poured out a flaskful of the wine, secured it in her pocket, threw her husband's scarf over her arm, and told David she was ready. At which word the dog gave another appreciative bounce, and fairly flew past her as she opened the door.

But, once in the path leading to the forest, David seemed to have had his brief flicker of intelligence taken out of him. Instead of trotting on and leading his mistress in the right way, following the recorded example of all sensible dogs, he held back shrinkingly, evidently declining to take an active part in the search, or to lead it. It was just as though he meant to say, "I have done my part: you go on and do yours."

"You are an awful idiot, David; or else I am!" snapped Jenny. But David only meekly curled his tail and trotted behind her.

The forest, or the "wood-lot," as Roland called it, catching the word from other settlers, was a good mile away. Mr. Hardy's acres covered an amount of ground that would have turned his late New England neighbours dizzy with its vastness. It would soon yield him an ample return; at present, during these preliminary struggles, it was not much more than a living. But in the event of a certain phantom railroad becoming a real railroad, he would make a speedy fortune.

The path was rough. Roland's boots alone had formed it, tramping backwards and forwards to his tree-felling. Generally he paced it four times a day, going home for the mid-day dinner. The drifting snow hid treacherous holes that well-nigh went to break Jenny's ankles, as she stumbled on. The wind, growing every moment more violent, pushed her on with a giant hand; sharp needle-points of snow smote her neck. "It will be rather sharp going home," she said, shivering, and pulling her scarf closer.

In October she had come to the woods for autumn leaves, and the spot was, in a degree, familiar to her. But the path seemed to disperse and lose itself after entering the thicker parts; and she had to

direct her way by the piles of wood that had been cut in places where the trees could be most conveniently felled. If they had not said those dreadful words to each other! if they were only as they had been yesterday when Roland loved her! she might not have felt so desperately anxious. How was she to find him? She called again and again, but the wind overpowered her voice.

There was no sound of the axe. As she paused, listening intently, she could hear nothing but the dreary whistle of the blast through the naked trees, and the sharp, sifting sound of the snow as it smote their trunks.

"David, where is Roland?—where is your master? Go and find him this minute!"—impatiently menacing the cowering dog in her terror. "Find your master, there's a good dog," she added, in a coaxing tone of entreaty, patting the poor animal, who stood before her with drooping head. "Good David! good old dog!"

David went on then. In the lowest natures is sometimes enshrined the pearl of delicate feeling. This dog had bad news to tell, and shrank from telling it. He made no pretence to a light-hearted pace. He crept, halted, and seemed anxious to defer something.

Leading the way over a freshly-felled log, then another, and turning a thicket of young oaks, that caught at Jenny's skirts as if they would fain hold her back from a painful sight, he came to a halt. There was no reason why he should go farther.

A tree had evidently fallen in an unlooked-for direction: or, perhaps Roland Hardy had been a little reckless. It had swept him to the ground, and was lying across his legs; as immovable, to him, as a mountain. On the rough bark, where he had been able to reach it with his knife, was cut "Dear Jen——," showing that he had not intended to call her "Jane" on this occasion. But the fond work, which perhaps was intended as a last memento, had ceased. His arms were lying at his sides now, and a fleck of blood stained his blue lips. Jenny thought it was the life crushed out of him; but it only came of his long and vain struggles to free himself.

She did not scream. It was not her way. She rushed forward to fling herself against the fallen tree; pushing it, beating it, bruising her shoulders against it, like some mad woman. This was her first impulse; and it availed nothing. Then she sank down at her husband's side, wiped the red drops from his mouth, and covered his face with kisses that might have kissed the dead into life. The kisses made Roland faintly stir, and he moved his hand instinctively toward the knife, which had fallen in the snow. He was wanting to finish his message.

"Roland! Roland!" she cried in an anguished voice, seizing his benumbed hands in hers, and pressing them to her face and to her warm, throbbing throat. "Oh, if he could only speak to me once more!" she piteously moaned. "Only once more!"

"Is it—Jenny?" came struggling faintly from his lips.

"Yes, it is Jenny. I am here! I am here to die with you, my own blessed heart! Oh, what can I do?" raising his head tenderly to her breast. "Oh, my husband, look at me—speak to me! Are you terribly hurt?"

But, though he opened his eyes and looked at her, he could not answer.

Then she remembered the wine; and, filling the tiny cup at the bottom of the flask, she held it to his mouth. Roland drank the wine with difficulty: partly because he was only half-conscious, and partly because Jenny, in her wild solicitude, seemed bent on pitching the whole down his throat without waiting for the little formality of swallowing. She continued to rain the tenderest expressions upon him. Over his features began stealing something that, under the depressing circumstances, looked singularly like a pleased surprise. The eyes opened wider with a look of recognition, and a heaven of love shone up into Jenny's terror-stricken face. He laboriously flung his arm about her neck, and murmured her name again, as if it would express the tenderness of his whole soul.

"Are you crushed to death, dear Roland?" illogically cried Jenny.

"Not quite. But I'm so tired! I have been buried under this horrible log these four hours."

"Thank God you are not killed!" she aspirated. "Tell me what I can do."

"Poor child, you can do nothing. If a man were here with a handspike——"

His voice ceased: ceased in very hopelessness. The nearest man was probably two miles off. And before he could be found and brought, even if Jenny could find him, life might have gone out.

"I will do it," said Jenny. "Tell me where I can find a handspike.

"*You* could not do it, child."

"But I will," she returned cheerily. "I studied natural philosophy at school, and I have plenty of muscle. Did not somebody say he could move the world if—if he only had things to do it with; a lever, and that. *I* can cut down something for a lever, Roland."

She was speaking in sheer desperation. But a desperate woman can put out an incredible amount of strength: and the stake at issue was her husband's life. Roland saw how full of energy she looked; what an amount of determination her whole attitude betrayed. It imparted some degree of hope even to him, and he pointed to a pile of oak rails.

"If you could drag one of those here——"

She was flying for the rail before the words left his lips; had

brought it to the spot, and then began to try to lift the fallen tree. But the grim burden refused to move.

"Oh, Jenny ——"

"I see, Roland," she interrupted. "Don't be afraid. Of course I am stupid at first. Wait! I am undertaking to do too much at once, you perceive."

Jenny partly withdrew the lever, making the resistance less, and lifted again, with some effect. Roland's legs were too much like dead legs to be aware of the lightened pressure upon them; but he saw the log move a little.

Stars swam before Jenny's eyes, and the veins on her forehead looked like little knotted cords, as, averting her face from him, she strained at the lever once more with all her whole might. "Now!" she cried. He essayed to move his half-frozen limbs, but only succeeded in groaning. "They are dead as stones," he gasped; and looked as though he were going off into another faint.

Just for a moment she paused in despair. But courage and increased energy came back to her.

"Drink this, Roland," she said, putting out some more of the sustaining cordial. "I must prop up the log; and I think, dear, you can help me."

Selecting a larger rail, she dragged it up, and commanded him to push it under the log while she lifted with the lever. Reviving under the influence of her cheerful courage, he saw this as his golden and perhaps only opportunity. There was no man's aid within reach of this lonely spot, and night was coming down, bringing a tempest with it. The rail was placed; and, pushing it with all his remaining strength, he held each atom that the log yielded, while Jenny took breath to gain one more. Slowly and reluctantly the fallen tree was forced to acknowledge itself beaten, and at last rested on the prop. The man was free!

David got off his haunches, and wagged his tail.

Roland pressed his lips to the snow-wet hem of Jenny's skirt. The mute, eloquent act made her heart overflow, but she caught her skirt away hurriedly.

"I cannot allow you one minute's delay, Roland. It will be a horrible night. Do you think you can stand?"

With her help, he got upon his feet, but not until he had made more than one attempt. The legs were not broken, then: and this took a dreadful fear from Jenny's heart. But the returning circulation gave him intense pain. Leaning on his wife's proffered arm, he at length began to move homewards. The stormy twilight was already filling the forest. Managing to limp and stumble along, the outskirts of the wood were reached before absolute darkness had set in.

But until now they had not realized the terrible might of the storm.

It grew worse with every minute. David alone was able to distinguish the path that led homeward. Around them appeared nothing but the whirling snow. The forest was shut out, as by the sudden fall of a gigantic curtain; before them could be discovered nothing but the wavering form of David, as he wrestled with the difficulties of the path.

"We must walk for dear life!" gasped Roland.

He felt now all the hazard and terror of their position. It was almost impossible to breathe in the face of this fierce gale. If they lost the path, or the strength of either gave out, the result would be death.

They stumbled on, their arms entwined, making no attempt to speak after this. Once Jenny caught at David, patted his shoulder, and murmured that he was a good fellow, a brave dog; but she and her husband had enough to do for themselves.

It seemed to both that they must be nearly at home. Probably more than half the distance had been got over, when a calamity occurred. David disappeared. He was missing! Had their trusty pilot deserted them? Yes; for not a trace of him could be heard or seen. Roland shouted his name; but the wind dashed his voice back again, so that he scarcely heard it himself, and he had no hope of recalling the fugitive.

They were off the path now—the softer snow told them this; and they were both very cold, and alarmingly exhausted. Roland thought that this was the end; that all hope was over. He clasped his wife closely in his arms, and bowed his head on her shoulder. If he had not been half dead at the outset, with suffering and exhaustion, he would have borne up more bravely. As it was, he felt that his senses were taking leave of him; and he knew that if he failed, and he thought he had failed, he was laying down not only his own life, but a dearer life than his.

"Go on—leave me. Try to reach ——" he began saying in her ear. But Jenny would not listen to him. His despairing words filled her with frenzied strength.

"People talk that way when they are freezing," she thought. "He shall not die. Pray, Heaven, help me! Bear up, Roland. Just a little while longer! We must be pretty near the house. I still know enough to keep my face to the wind."

"I cannot go on further, Jenny. I must lie down and sleep."

"Never!" answered poor Jenny. "We will not give up. It is only frozen people who want to sleep. Oh, Father of all mercy, help us! If we may only reach our sweet, sweet home once more! If I may only have strength to save my dear heart! to make him know how I love him above everything in the world."

Thoughts like these were flitting through her brain as she struggled

on, almost falling at every step. Oh, the cruelly lengthened distance! Would they never touch anything else but snow—blinding, stinging, bewildering snow? Had it swept away house, fence, trees, everything, and left them nothing but this endless plain, where, sooner or later, they must sink down to their fatal rest?

Roland staggered, and fell heavily forward, casting her arm away from him. It was a gesture of farewell. For one instant it seemed to Jenny that it would be very sweet to fling herself down beside him and fall asleep. An aching weariness filled her limbs; her very heart seemed turning to ice.

Yet she would not give up. Energy, struggle, meant either life or death, as she should use or non-use, them. She partly raised poor Roland from the snow, and tried to shout encouraging words, but her lips were benumbed, and it was like shouting behind the torrent of Niagara.

It was when Jenny began desperately to drag him on by main force that Roland rallied a little, and showed signs of resistance. It was an ungallant thing for a man to permit a woman to carry him, or partially to carry him, he dimly thought, striving to free himself from her grasp. All his faculties were dulled. But the more he resisted, the more Jenny persevered. She always believed afterwards that God gave her strength.

It was while she was dragging, and coaxing, and lifting, and beating him, all at the same time, and luring him on with the sweetest and tenderest words, that a most heavenly sound swept across her half-delirious senses. The lowing of the cow! The cow, anxious for shelter and supper!

Then it was that the poor exhausted young woman felt that she should swoon herself; that she should die: the rebound from despair to hope was so sudden. On him, if he heard it, the sound made no impression. In that stage of apathy he would have unresistingly passed away to death, though the very firelight of home, so to say, was beaming from its windows upon him.

"Oh, merciful Father, help him!—let him not die now!" prayed Jenny. And with desperate energy she pulled him on; pulled, and pulled, and pulled. And the house was gained at last.

Fortunately, the fire had almost gone out in the stove, and the room had a healthful chill in its atmosphere, that was better suited than comfortable warmth to partly frozen people. It seemed an eternity to Jenny before she could command her fingers sufficiently to light the lamp. The lamp lighted, she had to crawl upstairs and fling down blankets and pillows, in which she buried her husband, first gladdening herself with the assurance that he was alive, and probably not badly frozen. Then she turned her attention to the fire. She regretted having said so haughtily, in that far-off morning—ages ago, it seemed—that

there was plenty of wood. There was no wood left now: she had put the last on before going out. But Mrs. Hardy had not survived the cruel tempest to perish for the lack of an armful of fuel. Her husband might die yet, if not properly cared for. She could not rest, she could not breathe, until he should speak to her again, and assure her that he was going to live.

She carried the lamp to the window, and shading her face with her hand, looked out. The wood-pile, whenever the driving snow permitted a glimpse, was a discouraging sight, only a log showing here and there, like the fin of a buried whale. Jenny shrugged her shoulders ruefully, and turned away. Then she bethought herself of a stack of wonderful knots and grotesque little stumps, which Roland had from time to time stored in a corner of the loft; to be worked up, when help in his labour should arrive and he had consequently more leisure, into vases and hanging-baskets for the house-plants. It seemed a pity to burn these; but pity must give way to necessity; and, without a moment's hesitation, Jenny re-ascended the stairs, and made a plentiful selection from them. They were dry as tinder; and in a short time a noble fire crackled and roared in the big stove, and Roland Hardy was oh-ing and ah-ing under his blankets with the pain of returning warmth.

The glowing consciousness that she had saved him bore Jenny up. Her own exhaustion was almost unfelt, her eyes sparkled triumphantly; and as she put the kettle over the fire, and got out Roland's slippers and some dry clothing, and placed them by the stove to warm, her heart was giving vent to praises of thankfulness.

She drew the wide, comfortable sofa to the fire, and heated its cushions. Then she stooped and took her husband's face in her hands.

"Oh Roland, do you know what a fearful tramp we have had? Do you know that we were freezing to death only a short while ago?"

Roland did not know anything very clearly as yet; but he grew conscious of being by the fire, wrapped in warm blankets; when, as he vaguely remembered, his last act was to lie down in the snow.

"What was done?" he presently asked. "How did we get here? Who helped us?"

"Angels!" replied Jenny.

"You must have brought me—and you may have killed yourself!" cried Roland: a glimmer of intelligence beginning to light up his eyes.

"Roland, dear, I am not dead yet. I don't mean to die, by Heaven's good will. And now I am going to pull off your boots."

"Oh, Jenny——"

But remonstrance was idle. He was thrust back on the pillows, and

his boots removed, with great difficulty, and many tragic flourishes and solemn remarks concerning his inordinate vanity in wearing such tight ones. Poor Jenny, in the joy of their escape, strove to make merry.

She was saying, as she put them away, that she would next get him into bed, and make him a cup of coffee; and Roland was struggling to free himself from the blankets, and vowing that he would have no more nonsense, when the room began whirling around her. "I feel so ridiculously faint," she said, as he started up; and the next moment she had fallen into his extended arms.

Her first sensation on coming to herself was a consciousness of intense comfort, mingled with a luxurious, drowsy wish that it might last for ever. Present time had faded from her. She fancied she was a child again, tenderly borne upon her mother's breast, and nestling among soft pillows. She heard the lambs bleating upon the green hillsides, the brown thrush singing in the sweet-briar hedges; the perfumes of clover-blossoms and of June roses seemed softly to sweep over her, touching her face like cool, sweet, shadowy hands; and she nestled closer among the pillows, and slept.

Her next consciousness was that of a man stumbling over a chair, and uttering in consequence a mild imprecation. She opened her eyes. The grey light of the late winter morning filled the little cabin. She was lying in one of her best night-gowns, tucked up in high state on the sofa; and it was the tea-kettle she had heard in her dreams, and the Cologne water on her face and hands that had seemed to her like the breath of summer fields. Close beside her was the arm-chair where Roland had sat and watched through the night. Her boots and snow-wet clothes were strewn recklessly about the floor; wine, camphor, the coffee-pot, and the chapped-hands lotion occupied the table; the bath-tub was tilted up by the wood-box; the wardrobe bore evidence of having been turned topsy-turvy; and David was calmly slumbering on her best shawl. The devastating power of man had been let loose in that orderly little house.

Poor David! He had got home then. He must have lost his way as they did.

Roland Hardy, awkwardly busy after man's fashion, and alternately regarding his wife, lest his movements had awakened her, looked half-bewildered. His manly face was softened by a look of the keenest and tenderest solicitude, interspersed with perplexity as to the household arrangements. He had just poured some water into the tea-kettle, and was looking helplessly about for the cover.

"On the top of the coffee-mill, dear," spoke up Jenny encouragingly. And she was surprised at the weak, tired sound of her own voice.

He came swiftly to her side, and knelt down. Jenny drew his head closely to her breast. "Dear heart!" she whispered "I am so glad we are alive!"

It was a long while before Roland spoke: and when he did, it was in a choking voice.

"I talked to you like a ruffian yesterday."

"No, dear, it was I who did that."

"It all came back to me in the night; and, with it, how you dragged me out of the jaws of death. You saved my life, Jenny."

"Because your life is so dear to me! I was only selfish, you see."

"And you risked your own life," he continued, softly. "I ought to have cut my tongue out, Jenny, before saying to you a cross word. Oh, my best and sweetest!"

A beautiful blush stole over her face, a smile parted her lips.

"Roland, you *know* it was all my fault, all my temper. But, my dear, I think this night has cured us both of ill temper for ever. And oh, how delightful seems to me the home here that I grumbled at."

Yes, it no doubt read an effectual lesson to both of them. There are enough real ills in life without creating imaginary ones. And this true picture of a day in a settler's existence may perhaps serve as a lesson to us, by making us more contented with our own civilized lot.

A MEETING.

THERE was a performance of Meyerbeer's "Huguenots." The opera-house that evening was full, almost to suffocation. The multitude followed with breathless attention the beautiful melodies and harmonies of this great composition. I made one of the listeners on this occasion; and, as the well-known scenes were enacted before me, there came up vividly to my mind's eye a vision of the evening, many years before, on which I had first learned how to comprehend the full beauty and significancy of the music in this opera.

To tell of that evening is the purpose I have in view in writing this sketch.

As a young girl, I had the good fortune to possess a kind and indul gent aunt, with whose appearance at our home in Berlin I had, from long experience, come to associate joyous expectations of some happy surprise, or approaching delightful treat. She usually lived on her own property through every winter, but, in the year 1855, she paid us a sudden visit in the middle of December, and I at once began looking forward to some coming pleasure. I had not deceived myself.

Her physicians had ordered her to travel southwards for the benefi of her health, and she had come to persuade my father to allow me to be her companion during her journey, and for all the winter month which she intended spending in Venice. It had long been the chie desire of my heart to see this beautiful city, and my sixteen-year-old heart beat tumultuously with delight, as I fell upon her neck and overwhelmed her with kisses.

In our northern land the cold weather had already set in with seve rity, and the roofs of all the houses were covered with snow; but in my youthful enthusiasm I seemed to feel beforehand the balmy air and soft breezes which I fancied I was to enjoy in Italy. Frosty days and cold winds are not things to be even thought of in connection with th land of orange blossoms. And yet I shiver now, as I recall to min a few out of the many damp, unpleasant afternoons and sharp chi evenings and mornings that I have passed under Italian skies. I countries where keen cold weather is a long and habitual winter gues we make all due preparations to receive him properly; but woe t the poor Southcountryman when Jack Frost steals upon him; he i never expected, and comes as a very enemy.

The first shock I received, in my preconceived rose-coloured idea of the perpetual beauty and sunshine to be enjoyed in Italy, came o

the third day of our journeying towards Venice. The rain fell in torrents, and a thick cloud of mist obscured the distant prospect, while the landscape around us, as we neared Palma Nuova, was flat and uninteresting, only enlivened by rows of gloomy-looking olive-trees. The horses were weary, and stumbled now and again in their monotonous trot. The coachman seemed out of temper, and tried in vain to rouse his steeds to more vigorous movement with his whip.

My aunt was ailing, and very tired. I felt depressed and out of heart. My dreams of ever green fields, of skies always serene and blue, of golden sunshine, and balmy breezes, had all proved vain. The reality, I said to myself, is this: and I drew my cloak tremblingly around me, as I looked up at the leaden clouds, and down at the dull landscape. We were right glad to reach an hotel in Palma Nuova, where we determined to spend the night, and my aunt went off to bed at once, attended by her maid, leaving me alone to entertain myself in our private sitting-room.

Although the town at which we had stopped is admired by many for its fine fortifications and water privileges, and though I learned that it had been built in 1593 by my favourite Venetians, I could, on this evening, see no beauty anywhere. I stood at the closed window, and looked peevishly out at the straight, melancholy, empty streets, which lay inches deep in mud; and I began to long for my dear, comfortable home, with its well-warmed, cheerful, well-lighted rooms; for my interesting books; and, above all, for my beautiful piano, upon which it was my custom to play every evening.

I glowered over with discontent at the little morsel of fire which had been lit in the large open grate, and which could not possibly warm this enormous room. For the first time in my life I felt out of humour with my aunt, who had brought me to this wearisome place. There is no more ungrateful office in the world than that of a kind, good-natured aunt. I would sooner be anything in the world than such an aunt! Let but the least little thing go wrong, and we nephews and nieces are sadly forgetful of all the love and kindness shown.

The master of the house brought up some refreshments, and began to talk to me; and, for want of something better to do, I talked to him in return, and complained of the silence and stupidity of his house. He told me that usually his hotel was, about this time, one of the busiest in the town, as it was patronised by all the officers of the garrison, but that they had been bidden this evening to a great entertainment given by the commander-in-chief.

As the Albergo was quite deserted, therefore, the host suggested that the Signorina should condescend to go down to a room near the great dining-hall. In this room there was a piano, kept for the amusement of guests, and as the Signorina seemed in need of diversion, it might entertain her to play for a while. The Excellenza should, he

promised, find herself quite undisturbed, as there were no other guests in the house.

I warmly welcomed the idea of thus whiling away, somewhat pleasantly, a portion of this long, dreary winter's evening: and after having told my aunt's maid where she could find me, in case I should be wanted, I followed my new friend into what he called the music-room, passing through the dining-hall in order to reach it.

The piano was a wretched affair, out of tune and out of order in every way, but nevertheless I felt very happy, as my fingers strayed over it. I was only an amateur player, and I have never been anything else, but I had much taste, and I believe much talent also, for music; and my father had taken care that I should always have the best masters the city of Berlin could afford for my instruction.

I could play from memory almost everything I had ever learned, and therefore the gathering gloom of the evening proved no hindrance to my enjoyment. When my host brought in lights I was beginning to play as much as I could remember of the music from the "Huguenots," which had not then been long published. The piano stood against the wall, opposite to the door opening out into the dining-hall, to which door I therefore had my back turned as I played.

I had commenced playing the conspirators' chorus in the second act, and was endeavouring to execute it perfectly, when I heard a voice, close behind me, say:

"You are playing that chorus quite incorrectly, Fraülein. Your execution is not equal for the difficulty of the music. You do not play clearly."

I turned round in startled surprise. I was so engrossed in my music that I had heard no footstep in the room since the landlord had left me. I was therefore amazed to see now, at my side, a man past middle age. He was slight and small, and carried himself weakly, and somewhat as though it were an effort to keep upright. His hair was quite grey, but a pair of luminous brown eyes, full of almost youthful fervour, lit up his face.

Although many years have passed, I think I can still see all the varying expressions of those eyes. They could look soft and dreamy, or eager and excited; and again they often, a little later on, gazed down upon me with fatherly benevolence.

Just then, however, I was full of angry indignation at what I considered a most intolerable piece of impertinence offered to me by a perfect stranger. I could find no words in which to express my resentment. To think that an insignificant nobody should presume to find fault with my style of playing! when I had been taught by the best masters money could pay for; and when I was the most admired and praised of performers in our whole large home circle of musical friends and acquaintances.

My vanity was sorely wounded, and my pride hurt; but I thought it beneath me to take any notice either of the stranger or of his remarks, and I silently recommenced playing, and went on as if there had come no interruption to my performance of the chorus. But I know not how it happened: my memory failed me, my fingers refused to touch the right notes, and I certainly did now play incorrectly and badly. A second time the stranger spoke, close to my ear.

"That last passage, Fraülein, was entirely wrong. You seem to fancy it ought to be played fortissimo, while I can assure you it is marked 'adagio maestoso.'"

These words were spoken in a tone of quiet superiority, and the speaker had a slight smile about the corners of his lips. But his very calmness made one feel doubly irritated. I knew that I had played badly, but I was not used to hearing myself blamed in any way; and I had certainly never been reproved before in this fashion. I looked up at the stranger, with a proud, contemptuous glance, and a mocking smile, letting my eyes rest a moment on the many-coloured ribbons with which I perceived his plain overcoat was adorned.

"You appear to be a master," I said, with a covert sneer. "You seem to understand playing the tutor remarkably well!"

"Something of the sort, Fraülein," he answered, indifferently, without in the least losing his calm tranquillity of manner. "And my wish would be to have you as a pupil."

"It is a wish that I do not share in the least," I answered, coldly.

"So I should fancy. For I should be a hard master; and would be no party to the sin of destroying your real talent for music by bestowing on you undeserved praise. I would lay all your faults before you, that you might correct them."

"You are a bear," I muttered in a half whisper. But the stranger heard me, and observed immediately:

"You have designated me very correctly, Fraülein. I am certainly a kind of bear."

"You have determined to prove yourself one by your behaviour to me," I cried, angrily.

"You played with such remarkable talent, Fraülein, that you awakened in me a desire to show you how to play still better," he said, in a tone which, for the first time, betrayed some little feeling of discomfort at my manner. "As for the rest, if you will now be so good as to play over that 'adagio' passage again, I am sure you can manage to go through it properly."

"It is not my custom to perform before strangers," I said, majestically. "I will leave the instrument to you. As your criticisms on others are so severe, you can no doubt do far better than every one else on the piano." I stood up, and turned away, after making a scornful little bow.

"I am well used to being criticised myself, Fraülein," he answered sadly, sitting down before the piano, as I reached the room door. "But, I pray you, now listen to how I play the 'Huguenots.' I hope you will not scruple to tell me of anything you think amiss, just as plainly as I told you of your faults."

My vanity and wounded pride made me linger when he said this; and on the instant I resolved to wait, and signify the disapproval I felt sure I should feel at his style of playing operatic music. For, as I said to myself, how could this presuming unknown music-master understand anything about the "Huguenots"?

When the stranger began to play, however, I started in amazement. Beautiful chords swelled under his fingers. Lovely tones came out of the wretched ill-tuned instrument. I felt instinctively that the hands which now touched the keys were those of a great master.

The lament of the betrayed Huguenots filled the little room with sobbing, wailing melody, and from that scene he went on through the beautiful music of the opera with such wonderful and varying expression that I felt as though the whole drama were enacted before me.

I crept back slowly, nearer and nearer to the player, and as he ended, I cried in a half whisper: "Oh, sir, who are you? I never heard anyone play like that before!"

"I am a poor travelling musician," he said, smiling. "I am about to try my fortune now in Venice."

"We are going to Venice too," I cried, joyfully. "You must not scruple to apply to us if we can be of use to you in any way. We have many influential friends and acquaintances there." I then told him my aunt's name, and he bowed gratefully.

"If I need your help, Fraülein, I shall not scruple to apply to you," he replied. "In the meantime, I trust you will try and forget your anger at my presumption in telling you of your faults."

He reached out his hand, and, without thinking of what I was about, I put mine for a moment within his grasp. Then throwing an expensive fur cloak over his shoulders, he left the room, and a few minutes later I heard the post-horn sounding. It was only then that I remembered I had never asked the stranger his name. I inquired about him from the landlord, but he could give me no information. He had never seen the gentleman before, he said, and had only supplied him with a little refreshment, which was all the traveller required of him.

When my aunt heard my story she was vexed with me for having assured an utter stranger he should have her patronage and interest; but I could think of nothing all the evening except the wonderful music I had heard.

Venice, the city of wonders, the home of romantic beauty and of dark mysteries, was reached by us at last. Venice, with its gloomy palaces, of which each stone has often been the witness of some great

deed, or of some terrible, all-important moment. Venice; with its lofty buildings, its antique marble statues, and its great canals, its floor of green waves, and its manifold attractions of the past and present; had opened its gates to us.

We had wondered over the masterpieces of Titian, Tintoretto, and Georgione, had gazed in astonishment and delight at the paintings of Veronese and Bassano, in the gilded halls of the Doges' Palace. The famous men and women of old times had gazed down upon us from the walls, making us live and think in the past, and long to have been present at some of the great scenes we had read of. It was not until we had lived through our first enthusiasm for art that we took part in much of the social intercourse of the city. As time went on, however, we were overwhelmed with invitations.

We spent Christmas Eve at the house of some rich German friends, who kept the festival in a good old-fashioned way. There was a splendid Christmas tree, hung with beautiful things, and bright with many coloured lamps. The rooms were full of guests, and all seemed to enjoy the festivities.

Suddenly there was a flutter amongst those present. A name was mentioned, a great and famous name, when the master of the house, who had been absent for a moment, reappeared, in company with a new arrival. My heart beat fast when I heard this name, for I had many times longed to catch even a distant glimpse of its owner. Our host, I saw, was coming in our direction, and I watched the guests making way for the two gentlemen with ill-concealed eagerness.

"Herr Giacomo Meyerbeer wishes to be introduced to you two ladies," our entertainer said, laughingly, to my aunt. At that instant I got a good view of the great musician, and recognized in him the stranger whom I had so scorned at Palma Nuova, and whom I had then offered to patronize! I trembled and blushed with shame, as he looked smilingly at me; but he had pity on my confusion, and proved himself then and afterwards a most kind and trusty friend to me.

I need hardly say that I was present at the first appearance of the "Huguenots," in Venice, for which the great composer had come to the city.

On Christmas morning I received a lovely nosegay of flowers, accompanied by a copy of the "Huguenots," arranged for the pianoforte. In the book Meyerbeer had written:

"One may be half a bear, and yet rejoice in the talent of others."

A DEAD LEAF.

A DEAD leaf drifted by the rain
Against the dripping window-pane,
Like faded hope that comes again
Athwart the breast,
When summer days have long passed by,
And all its fellows silent lie
Forgotten 'neath life's autumn sky
In peaceful rest.

Ah, little leaf ; you speak to me
Of what has been ; of what shall be :
I see a fair and spreading tree
In spring-time gay,
Its branches hid beneath a screen
Of feathery foliage fresh and green,
That glitters in noon's golden sheen,
Nor fears decay.

I see those branches gaunt and bare ;
I hear the wild winds moaning there ;
Damp vapours rising fill the air ;
Pale clouds flit low.
Sweet spring and summer, where are they ?
The gold and green are changed to grey ;
Grim winter holds his fallen prey
Beneath the snow.

I close my eyes : dark is the night ;
I wake : the world is clothed with light ;
I scarce can bear the dazzling sight
Which meets my view.
Winter and winter's night are past,
A wondrous day has dawned at last,
A spring of springs o'er earth has cast
A glory new.
Wise little leaf ! my heart beats fast ;
Your tale is true.

EMMA RHODES.

M ELLEN EDWARDS. J. SWAIN.

STOLEN INTERVIEWS.

THE ARGOSY.

APRIL, 1876.

EDINA.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER X.

SCHEMING.

THE light of the hot and garish day had nearly faded from the world, leaving on it the cool air, the grateful hues of twilight. Inexpressibly grateful was that twilight to Frank Raynor and the pretty girl by his side, as they paced unrestrainedly, arm in arm, the paths of that wilderness, the garden at the Mount. The period of half-breathed vows and murmured tender hints had passed: each knew the other's love, and they spoke out together confidentially of the future.

After the unpleasant truth—that Frank was not the heir to Eagles Nest—had so unexpectedly dawned on Mrs. St. Clare, she informed her daughter Margaret that the absurd intimacy with Mr. Raynor must be put aside. Margaret, feeling stunned for a minute or two, plucked up the courage to ask why. Because, answered Mrs. St. Clare, it had turned out that he was not the heir to Eagles' Nest. And Margaret, whose courage increased with exercise, gently said that that was no good reason: that she liked Mr. Raynor for himself, not for any prospects he might or might not possess, and that she *could not* give him up. A stormy interview ensued. At least, on the mother's part it was stormy: Margaret was only quiet, and inwardly firm. And the upshot was, that Mrs. St. Clare, who hated contention, as most indolent women do, finally got into a passion, and told Margaret that if she chose to marry Mr. Raynor she must; but that she, her mother, and the Mount, and the St. Clare family generally, would wash their hands of her for ever afterwards.

When once Mrs. St. Clare said a thing, she held to it. Margaret

knew that; and she knew that from henceforth there was no probability, one might almost write possibility, of inducing her mother to consent to her marrying Frank Raynor. Margaret was mistress of her own actions in one sense of the word: when Colonel St. Clare died he left no restrictions on his daughters. All his money; it was not much; was bequeathed to his wife and was at her own absolute disposal; but not a word was said in his will touching the free actions of his daughters. Mrs. St. Clare knew this; Daisy knew it; and that, in the argument, gave the one an advantage over the other.

But Mrs. St. Clare, in the dispute, committed a fatal error. When people fall into a passion, they often say injudicious things. Had she said to Margaret, I forbid you to marry Mr. Raynor, Margaret would never have thought of disobeying the injunction: but when Mrs. St. Clare said, If you choose to marry him, do so, but I shall wash my hands of you, it put the idea into Margaret's head. Mrs. St. Clare had used the words because they came uppermost in her anger, attaching no real meaning to them, never supposing that advantage could be taken of them. To her daughter they wore a different aspect. Right or wrong—though of course it was wrong, not right—she looked upon it as a half-tacit permission: and from that moment the contemplation of marrying Frank with nobody's consent but her own, took possession of her. To lose him seemed terrible in Margaret's eyes; she would almost as soon have lost life: and instinct whispered to her a warning that in a short while Mrs. St. Clare would contrive to separate them, and they might never meet more.

It was of this terrible prospect—separation—or, rather, of avoiding the prospect, that Mr. Raynor and Margaret were conversing in the twilight of the summer's evening. For once they had met and could linger together without restraint. Mrs. St. Clare and Lydia had gone to a dinner party ten miles away: Margaret had not been invited; the card said Mrs. and Miss St. Clare; and so they could not take her. Mrs. St. Clare, divining perhaps that her absence might be thus made use of, had proposed to Lydia to allow Margaret to be the one to go; but Lydia, selfish as usual, preferred to go herself. Mr. Raynor was no longer a visitor at the Mount. Mrs. St. Clare, after the rupture with Margaret, wrote a request to Dr. Raynor, that for the future *he* would attend himself; but she gave no reason. So that the lovers had not had many meetings lately.

All the more enjoyable was the one of this evening. Frank had gone over on speculation. Happening to hear Dr. Raynor say that Miss St. Clare was going out to dinner with her mother, he walked over on the chance of seeing Margaret. And there they were, clinging to each other amid the sighing trees and the scent of the night flowers.

Frank, open-natured, single-minded, had told her every particular of his visit to Spring Lawn—what he had gone for, what the result had

been, and what his uncle the Major had assured him of, the large sum he might confidently reckon upon under Mrs. Atkinson's will. To this hour Frank knew not the full truth of Mrs. St. Clare's changed manners; for Margaret, in her delicacy, did not give him a hint as to Eagles' Nest. "Mamma thinks that you—that you are not rich enough to marry," said poor Margaret, stammering somewhat in the brief explanation. But, as he was now pointing out to Margaret with all his eloquence, the time could not be very far off when he should be rich enough.

"Shall you not consider it so, Daisy? When I shall join some noted man in London, to be paid well for my services temporarily, and with the certainty of being his partner at no distant date? We should have a nice house; I would take care of that; and every comfort in it. Not a carriage; not luxuries; I could not attempt that at first; but we could afford, in our happiness, to wait for them."

"Oh yes," murmured Daisy, thinking to herself that it would be Paradise.

"If I fully explain all this to your mother——"

"It would be of no use: she would not listen," interrupted Daisy. "I—I hardly like to tell you what she said, Frank. One thing we may rest assured of—that she will never, never give her consent."

"But she must give it, Daisy. Does she suppose we could give each other up? You and I are not children, to be played with—divided without rhyme or reason."

"In a short while—I do not know how short—mamma intends to shut up the Mount and take me and Lydia to Switzerland and Italy. It may be *years* before we come back, Frank; years, and years, and years. I daresay I should never see you again."

"I'm sure you speak calmly enough about it, Daisy! As if you liked it!"

Calmly enough! Liked it! Looking down at her he met her reproachful eyes and the sudden tears the words called up in them.

"My darling, what is to be done? You cannot go abroad with them: you must stay in England."

"As if that would be possible!" breathed Daisy. "I have no one to stay with; no relatives, or anything. And if I had, mamma would not leave me."

"I wish I could marry you off hand!" cried thoughtless Frank, speaking more in the impulse of the moment than attaching any real meaning to what he said.

Daisy sighed: and put her cheek against his arm. And what with one word and another, they both began to think it might be. Love is blind, and love's arguments, though sweetly specious, are sadly delusive. In a few minutes they had got to think that an immediate marriage, as private as might be, was the only way to save them from perdition.

That is, to preserve them one for another: and that it would be the very best mode of proceeding under their untoward lot.

"The sooner it is done, the better, Daisy," cried Frank, going in for it now with all his characteristic eagerness. "I'd say to-morrow, if I had the license, but I must get that first. I hope and trust your mother will not be very angry!"

Daisy had not lifted her face. It pressed his arm all the closer. Frank filled up an interlude by taking a kiss from it.

"Mamma said that if I did marry you, she should wash her hands of me," whispered Daisy.

"Said that! Did she! Why, then, Daisy, she must have seen for herself that it was our best and only resource. I look upon it almost in the light of a permission."

"Do you think so?"

"Of course I do. And so do you, don't you? How good of her to say it!"

With the blushes, that the subject called up, lighting her face, they renewed their promenade amid the trees, under the grey light of the evening sky, talking earnestly. The matter itself settled, ways and means had to be discussed. Frank's arm was round her; her hand was again lying in his.

"Our own church at Trennach will be the safest, Daisy; the safest, and best; and the one most readily got to. You can come down to it at an early hour: eight o'clock, say. They will not be astir here at home, and I'll be bound you will meet nobody en route. The road is lonely enough, you know, whether you take the highway or the Bare Plain."

Daisy did not answer. Her clear eyes had a far-off look in them, gazing at the grey sky.

"Fortune itself seems to aid us," went on Frank, briskly. "At almost any time but this we might not have been able to accomplish it so deftly. Had I gone to Mr. Pine and said, I want you to marry me and say nothing about it, he might have demurred; thought it necessary to consult Dr. Raynor first, or invented some such scruple; but with Pine away and this new man here the matter is easy. And so Daisy, my best love, if you will be early at the church the day after to-morrow, I shall be there waiting for you."

"What do you call early?" asked Daisy.

"Eight o'clock, I said. It had better not be later. We'll get married, and not a soul will be any the wiser."

"Of course I don't mean it to be a real wedding," said Daisy, blushing violently, "with a tour, and a breakfast, and all that, Frank. We can just go into the church, and go through the ceremony, and come out again at different doors; and I shall walk home here, and you will go back to Dr. Raynor's. Don't you see?"

"All right," said Frank.

"And if it were not," added Daisy, bursting into a sudden flood of tears, "that it seems to be the only way to ensure our non-separation, and that mamma must have had some idea we should take it when she said she should wash her hands of me, I'd not do such a dreadful thing for the world."

Frank Raynor set himself to soothe her, kissing the tears away. A few more minutes given to the details of the plan, an urgent charge to Daisy to keep her courage up, and to be at the church in time, and then they separated.

Daisy stood at the gate and watched him down the slight incline from the Mount, until he disappeared. She remained where she was, dwelling upon the momentous step she had decided to take; now shrinking from it instinctively, now telling herself that it was her only chance of happiness in this world, and now blushing and trembling at the thought of being his wife, though only in name, ere the setting of the day-after-to-morrow's sun. When she at length turned with a slow step indoors, the lady's-maid, Tabitha, was in the drawing-room.

"Is it not rather late for you to be out, Miss Margaret? The damp is rising. I've been in here twice before to see if you'd not like a cup of tea."

"It is as dry as it can be—a warm, lovely evening," returned Margaret. "Tea? Oh, I don't mind whether I take any or not. Bring it if you like, Tabitha."

With this semi-permission, the woman withdrew to bring the tea. Margaret looked after her and knitted her brow.

"She has been watching me and Frank—*I think*. I am sure old Tabitha's sly—and fond of interfering in other people's business. I hope she will not go and tell mamma he was here—or Lydia."

This woman, Tabitha Float, had only lived with them since they were at the Mount: their former maid, at the last moment, having declined to quit Bath. Mrs. St. Clare had made inquiries for one when she reached the Mount, and Tabitha Float presented herself. She had recently left a family in the neighbourhood and was staying at Trennach with her relatives, making her home at the druggist's. Mrs. St. Clare engaged her, and there she was. She proved to be a very respectable and superior servant, but somewhat fond of gossip: and in that latter propensity was encouraged by Lydia. Amid the ennui pervading the days of Miss St. Clare, and which she unceasingly complained of, even the tattle of an elderly serving-maid seemed an agreeable interlude.

Not a word said Frank Raynor of the project in hand. Serious, nay solemn, though the step he contemplated was, he was entering upon it in the lightest and most careless manner (speaking relatively), with no more thought than he might have given to the contemplation of a journey.

He had remarked to Margaret—who, in point of prudence, was not, in this case, one whit better than himself—that fortune itself seemed to be aiding them. In so far as that circumstances were just now, through the absence of the Rector of Trennach, more favourable to the safe and easy accomplishment of the ceremony than they could have been at another time, that was true. The Reverend Mr. Pine had at length found himself obliged to follow the advice of Dr. Raynor, and was gone away with his wife for three months' rest. A young clergyman, named Backup, was taking the duty for the time; he had but just arrived, and was a stranger to the place. With him, Frank could of course deal more readily in the affair than he would have been able to do with Mr. Pine.

Morning came. Not the morning of the wedding, but the one following the decisive interview between Frank and Margaret. Frank made some plea at home for going to a certain town—which we will here call Tello—in search of the ring and the marriage license. It happened that the Raynors had acquaintances there; and Edina unsuspiciously bade Frank call and see them. Frank went by rail, and was back again before dusk.

Taking his tea at home, and reporting to Edina that their friends at Tello were well and flourishing, Frank went out later to call at the rectory. It was a gloomy kind of dwelling, the front windows looking out upon the graves in the churchyard. Mr. Backup was seated at his early and frugal supper of bread-and-butter and milk when Frank entered. He was a very shy and nervous young man; and he blushed scarlet at being caught eating, as he started up to receive Frank.

"Pray don't let me disturb you," said Frank, shaking hands, and then sitting down in his cordial way. "No, I won't take anything, thank you,"—as the clergyman hospitably handed him the plate of bread-and-butter. "I've not long had tea. Well, just a slice, then."

His taking the bread-and-butter and eating it with great relish, and then, in pure good fellowship, helping himself to another slice, put Mr. Backup considerably at ease: and the two talked and eat simultaneously.

"I am come to ask you to do me a little service, Mr. Backup," began Frank, plunging headlong into the communication he had to make.

"I'm sure I shall be very happy to—to—do anything," murmured Mr. Backup.

"There's a wedding to be celebrated at the church to-morrow morning. The parties wish it to be got over early—at eight o'clock. It won't be inconvenient to you, will it, to be ready for them at that hour?"

"No—I—not at all," stammered the young divine, relapsing into a

state of inward tumult and misgiving. Not as to any doubt of the orthodoxy of the wedding itself, but as to whether he should be able to get over his part of it satisfactorily. He had never married but one couple in his life: and then he had made the happy pair kneel down at the wrong places, and contrived to let the bridegroom put the ring on the bride's right-hand finger.

"Not at all too early," repeated he, striving to appear at his ease, lest this ready-mannered, dashing young man should suspect his nervousness on the score and his sense of deficiency. "Is it two of the miners' people?"

"You will see to-morrow morning," replied Frank, laughing, and passing over the question with the most natural ease in the world. "At eight o'clock, then, please to be in the church. You will be sure not to keep them waiting?"

"I will be there before eight," said Mr. Backup, rising as Frank rose.

"Thank you. I suppose it is nothing new to you," lightly added Frank, as a passing remark. "You have married many a couple, I daresay."

"Well—not so many. In my late curacy, the rector liked to take the marriages himself. I mostly did the christenings: he was awkward at holding the babies."

"By the way, I have another request to make," said Frank, pausing at the front door, which the clergyman had come to open for him. "It is, that you would kindly not mention this beforehand."

"Not mention?—I don't quite understand," replied the bewildered young man. "Not mention what?"

"That there's going to be a wedding to-morrow. The parties would not like the church to be filled with gaping miners; they wish it to be got over quite privately."

"I will be sure not to mention it," readily assented Mr. Backup. "For that matter, I don't suppose I shall see anybody between now and then. About the clerk——"

"Oh, I will see him: I'll make that all right," responded Frank. "Good evening."

He went skimming over the grave-mounds to the opposite side of the churchyard, with little reverence, it must be owned, for the dead who lay beneath: but when a man's thoughts are filled with weddings, he cannot be expected to regard graves. Crossing a stile, he was then close to the clerk's dwelling: a low, one-storied cottage with a slanting roof, enjoying the same agreeable view as the rectory. The clerk's wife, a round, rosy little woman, was milking her goat in the shed, her gown pinned up around her.

"Halloa, Mrs. Trim! you are doing that rather late, are you not? cried Frank.

"Late! I should think it is late for't, Master Frank," answered

Mrs. Trim, in wrath. She was familiar enough with him, from the fact of going to the Doctor's house occasionally to help the servant. "I goes over to Pendon this afternoon to have a dish o' tea with a friend there, never thinking but what Trim would attend to poor Nanny. But no, not a bit of it. Drat all the men!—a set o' helpless bodies. I don't know what work Trim's good for, save to dig the graves."

"Where is Trim?"

"Indoors, sir, a-smoking his pipe."

Frank stepped in without ceremony. Trim, who was sexton as well as clerk, sat at the kitchen window, which looked on to the field at the back. He was a man of some fifty years: short and thin, with scanty locks of iron-grey hair, just as silent as his wife was loquacious, and respectful to his betters. Rising when Frank entered, he put his pipe down in the hearth, and touched his hair.

"Look here, Trim; I want to send you on an errand," said Frank, lowering his voice against any possible eavesdroppers, and speaking in a hurry; for he had patients to see yet to-night. "Can you go a little journey for me to-morrow morning?"

"Sure I can, sir," replied Trim. "Anywhere you please."

"All right. I went to Tello this afternoon, and omitted to call at the post-office for some letters that may be waiting there. You must go off betimes, by the half-past seven o'clock train; get the letters—if there are any—and bring them to me at once. You'll be back again long before the sun has reached the meridian, if you make haste. There's a sovereign to pay your expenses. Keep the change."

"And in what name are the letters lying there, sir?" asked the clerk a thoughtful man at all times, and touching his hair again as he took up the gold piece.

"Name? Oh, mine: Francis Raynor. You will be sure not to fail me?"

The clerk shook his head emphatically. He never did fail anyone.

"That's right. Be away from here at seven, and you'll be in ample time for the train, walking gently. Do not speak of this to your wife, Trim: or to anybody else."

"As good set that there church bell a-clapping as she, sir," replied the clerk, confidentially. "You needn't be afeared o' me, Mr. Frank. I know what they women's tongues be: they don't often get no oiling from me, sir."

And away went Frank Raynor, over the stile and the mounds again, calling back a good evening to Mrs. Trim; who was just then putting up her goat for the night.

Scheming begets scheming. As Frank found. Open and straightforward though he was by nature and by conduct, he had to scheme now. He wanted the marriage kept absolutely secret at present from everybody: save of course from the clergyman who must, of necessity,

take part in it. For this reason he was sending clerk Trim out of the way, to inquire after some imaginary letters.

Another little circumstance turned out in his favour. Eight o'clock was the breakfast hour at Dr. Raynor's. It was clear that if Frank presented himself to time at the breakfast table, he could not be standing before the altar rails in the church. Of course he must absent himself from breakfast, and invent some plea of excuse. But this was done for him. Upon quitting the clerk's and hastening to his patients, he found one of them so much worse that it would be essential to see him at the earliest convenient hour in the morning. And this he said later to the Doctor. When his place was seen vacant at breakfast, it would be concluded by his uncle and Edina that he was detained abroad by the exigencies of the sick man.

But, if Fortune was showing herself to be thus kind to him in some respects, Fate was preparing to be less so. Upon how apparently accidental and even absurd a trifle great events often turn : or, rather, to what great events, affecting life and happiness, one insignificant incident will lead, the world does not need to be told.

CHAPTER XI.

THE WEDDING.

"PAPA, will you come to breakfast?—Oh dear! what is the matter?"

Edina might well ask. She had opened the door of the small consulting room as the clock was chiming eight—the knell of Frank Raynor's bachelorhood—to tell her father that the meal was waiting, when she saw not only the hearth and the hearth-rug, but the Doctor himself enveloped in a cloud of soot, looking as black as Erebus.

"I said yesterday the chimney wanted sweeping, Edina."

"Yes, papa, and it was going to be done next week. Have you been burning more paper in the chimney?"

"Only just a letter: but the wind took it and carried it up. Well, this is a pretty pickle!"

"The room shall be done to-day, papa. It will be all right and ready for you again by night."

Dr. Raynor took off his coat and shook it, and then went up to his room to get the soot out of his whiskers. The fact was, seeing the letter, to which he had set light with a match, go roaring up the chimney, he stooped hastily to try to get it back again, remembering what a recent blazing had done; when at that moment down came a shower of soot.

As he was descending the stairs again, the front door was opened with a burst and a bang (there are no other words so fit to express the mad way in which excited messengers did enter), and told the

Doctor that he was wanted, there and then, by somebody who was taken ill and appeared to be dying. Drinking a cup of coffee standing, and eating a crust as he went, the Doctor followed the messenger. It had all passed so rapidly that Edina had not yet commenced her own breakfast.

"Hester," she said, calling rapidly to the servant maid, "papa has had to go out, and Mr. Frank is not yet in. You shall keep the coffee warm, and I will run at once to Mrs. Trim and see if she can come to-day. We must breakfast later this morning."

Edina hastily put on her bonnet and mantle, and went down the street towards the churchyard. The entrance to the church was at the other end, facing the open country, the parsonage was also: on this side, near to her, stood the clerk's house. She could go round to it without crossing the graveyard; and did so. Trying the door, she found it fastened—which was rather unusual at that hour of the morning. It was nothing for the door to be fastened later, when the clerk and his wife were alike abroad; the one on matters connected with his post, the other doing errands in the village, or perhaps at some house, helping to clean. Edina gave a good sharp knock with the handle of her umbrella, which she had brought with her; for dark clouds, threatening rain, were coursing fiercely about the sky. But the knock brought forth no response.

"Now I do hope she is not out at work to-day!" ejaculated Edina, referring to Mrs. Trim. "The sweep *must* come to the room; and Hester cannot well clean up after him herself with all her other work. There's the ironing about. If she has to do the cleaning to-day, I must do that."

Another knock brought forth the same result—nothing. Edina turned round to face the churchyard, and stood to think. The goat was browsing on the green patch close by.

"If I could find Trim, he would tell me at once whether she's away at work or not. She may have only run out on an errand. It is curious he should be out: this is their breakfast time."

All in a moment, as she stood there in indecision, an idea struck Edina: Mrs. Trim was no doubt dusting the church. She generally did it on Saturday, and this was Thursday: but, as Edina knew, if the woman was likely to be occupied on the Saturday, she took an earlier day for the duty.

Lightly crossing the stile, Edina went through the churchyard and round the church to the entrance porch. Her quick eyes saw that, though apparently shut, the door was not latched; and she pushed it open.

"Yes, of course: Mary Trim expects to be otherwise busy to-morrow and Saturday, and is doing the dusting to-day," spoke Edina to herself, deeming the appearances conclusive. "Well, she will have to make haste here, and come to us as soon as she can."

But it was no Mrs. Trim with her gown turned up about her waist, a round apron on, and a huge black bonnet perched forward on her head —for that was her usual church-cleaning costume—that Edina saw as she went gently through the inner green baize door. A very different sight met her eyes; a soft murmur of reading broke upon her ears. The church was not large, as compared with some churches, though of fairly good size for a country parish : and she seemed to come direct upon the solemn scene that was being enacted. At the other end, before the altar, stood, side by side, Frank and Margaret St. Clare : facing them was the new clergyman, Mr. Backup, book in hand.

Edina was extremely practical; but at first she could really not believe her eyesight. She stood perfectly motionless, gazing at them like one in a trance. They did not see her; and Mr. Backup's eyes were fixed on his book—which, by the way, seemed to tremble a little in his hands, as though he were being married himself. Coming to a momentary pause, he went on again in a raised voice; and the words fell thrillingly on the ear of Edina.

"I require and charge you both, as ye will answer at the dreadful day of judgment when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, that if either of you know any impediment, why ye may not be lawfully joined together in Matrimony, ye do now confess it. For be ye well assured, that so many as are coupled together otherwise than God's word doth allow are not joined together by God; neither is their Matrimony lawful."

The words, word by word, fell not only on Edina's ear; they touched her soul. Oh, was there no impediment? Ought these two silly people, wedding one another in this stolen fashion, and in defiance of parental authority—ought they to stand silent under this solemn exhortation, letting it appear that there was none? Surely this deceit ought, of itself, to constitute grave impediment! Just for the moment it crossed Edina's mind to stand forward, and beg them to reflect, to reflect well, ere this ceremony went on to the end. But she remembered how unfitting it would be: she knew that she possessed no manner of right to interfere with either the one or the other.

Drawing softly back within the door, she let it close again without noise, and made her way out of the churchyard. It appeared evident that neither the clerk nor his wife was in the church : and, if they had been, Edina could not have attempted then to speak to them.

Like one in a dream, went she, up the street again towards home. The clouds had become darker, and seemed to chase each other more swiftly and wildly. But Edina no longer heeded the wind or the weather. They might, in conjunction with burning paper, send the soot down every chimney in the house, for all the moment it was to her just now. She was deeply plunged in a most unpleasant reverie. A reverie which was showing her many future complications for Frank Raynor.

"Good morning, Miss Edina! You be abroad early, ma'am."

The voice was Mrs. Trim's: the black bonnet, going down with the rest of her in a curtsey, was hers also. She carried a small brown jug in her hand, and had met Edina close to the Doctor's house. Edina came out of her dream.

"I have been to see after you, Mrs. Trim, and could not get in. The door was locked."

"Dear now, and I be sorry, Miss Edina! I just went to carry a drop o' coffee and a morsel of hot toast to poor Granny Sandon: who've got nobody much to look after her since Rosaline Bell left. So I just locked the door, and brought the key away with me, as much to keep the Nannygoat out as for safety. She've got a way of loosing herself, Miss Edina, clever as I thinks I ties her, and of coming into the house: and they goats butts and bites at things, and does no end o' mischief."

"Your husband is out, then?"

"He've gone off somewhere by rail, Miss Edina. I couldn't get out of him where, though, nor what it were for. They men be closer nor wax when they want to keep things from ye; and Trim, he be always close. It strikes me, though, he be went somewhere for Mr. Raynor."

"Why do you think that?" cried Edina, quickly.

"Well, I be sure o' one thing, Miss Edina—that Trim had no thought o' going off anywhere when I come home last evening from Pendon; for after we had had a word or two about his not seeing to the goat, he said he was going to do our garden up to-day: which wouldn't be afore it wants it. Mr. Frank, he come in then, and was talking to Trim in the kitchen, they two together; and, agoing to bed, Trim asks for a clean check shirt, and said he was a-starting out in the morning on business. And, sure enough, he have went, Miss Edina, and I found out as he've went by one o' they trains."

Edina said no more. She marshalled the talkative woman indoors to look at the state of the Doctor's room, and to tell her it must be cleaned that day. Mrs. Trim took off her shawl there and then, and began to get ready for the work.

The Doctor had returned, and Hester was carrying the breakfast in. Edina took her place at the table, and poured out her father's coffee.

"Is Frank not in yet?" he asked, as she handed it to him.

"Not yet, papa."

"Why, where can he be? He had only Williamson to see."

Edina did not answer. She appeared to be intent on her plate. Fresh and fair and good she looked this morning, in her new gingham dress, purple spots on a cream-coloured ground; but she seemed to be lost in thought. The Doctor observed it.

"You are troubling yourself about that mess in my study, child!"

"Oh no, indeed I am not, papa. Mary Trim is here."

"Are you sure Frank's not in the surgery, Edina?" said Dr. Raynor again presently.

Knowing where Frank was, and the momentous ceremony he was taking part in—though by that time it had probably come to an end—Edina might with safety assure the Doctor that he was not in the surgery. Dr. Raynor let the subject drop: Frank had been called in to some fresh patient, he supposed, on his way home from Williamson's; and Edina, perhaps dreading to be further questioned, speedily ended her breakfast, and went to look after Mrs. Trim and the household matters.

When the Reverend Mr. Backup awoke from his slumbers that morning, the unpleasant thought flashed on his mind that he had a marriage ceremony to perform. Looking at his watch, he found it to be half-past seven, and up he started in a flurry. Having lain awake half the night, he had over-slept himself.

"Has the clerk been here for the key of the church, Betsey?" he called out to the old servant, just before he went out.

"No, sir."

It wanted only about eight minutes to eight then. Mr. Backup, feeling somewhat surprised, for he had found clerk Trim particularly attentive to his duties, walked along the passage to the kitchen, and took the church key from the nail where it was kept. Opening the church himself, he then went round to the clerk's house, and found it locked up.

Quite a hot tremor seized him. *Without* the clerk and his experience, it would be next-door to impossible for him to get through the service. Alone, he might break down. He should not know where to place the couple; or when to tell them to kneel down, when to stand up; or where the ring came in, or anything.

Where *was* the clerk? Could he have made some mistake as to the time fixed? However, it wanted yet some minutes to eight. Crossing the churchyard, he entered the church, put on his surplice, fetched the prayer-book into the vestry, and began studying the marriage service as therein written.

Frank Raynor came up to the church a minute after the clergyman entered it, and waited in the porch, looking out for his intended bride. Eight o'clock struck; and she had promised to be there before it. Why did she not come? Was her courage failing her? Did the black clouds, which were gathering overhead, appall her? Had Mrs. St. Clare discovered all, and was preventing her? Frank thought it must be one or other of these calamities.

There he stood, within the shelter of the porch, glancing out to the right and to the left. He could not go to meet her because he did not

know which way she would come: whether by the sheltered road-way, or across the Bare Plain. That was one of the minor matters they had forgotten to settle between themselves.

As Frank was gazing this way and that, and getting into as much of a flurry as was possible for one of his easy temperament to get, soft, hasty steps were heard approaching; and Margaret, nervous, panting, agitated, fell into his arms.

"My darling! I thought you must be lost."

"I could not get away before, Frank. Of all mornings, Lydia must needs choose this to send Tabitha to my room for some books from the shelves. Now, these did not do; then, the others did not do: the woman did nothing but run in and out. And the servants were about the passages: and oh, I thought I should never get away!"

A moment given to soothe her, to still her beating heart, and they entered the church together. Margaret threw off the thin cloak she had worn over her pretty morning dress of white-and-peach sprigged muslin, almost as delicate as white. She went up the church, flushing and paling, on Frank's arm: Mr. Backup came out of the vestry to meet them. In a few flowing and plausible words, Frank explained that it was himself who required the parson's services, handed him the license, and begged him to get the service over as soon as possible.

"The clerk is not here," answered the bewildered man.

"Oh, never mind him," said Frank. "We don't want him."

An older and less timid clergyman might have said, I cannot marry you under these circumstances: all Mr. Backup thought of was the getting through his own part in it. It certainly did strike him as being altogether very strange: the question even crossed him whether he was doing right and legally: but the license was in due form, and in his inexperience and his nervousness he did not make inquiries, or raise objections. When he came to the question, Who giveth this Woman to be married to this Man, and there was no response, nobody indeed to respond, he visibly hesitated: but he did not dare to refuse to go on with the service. Such an assumption of authority was utterly beyond the Reverend Mr. Backup. He supposed that the clerk was to have acted: but the clerk, from some inexplicable cause, was not present. Perhaps he had mistaken the hour. So the service proceeded to its close, and Francis Raynor and Margaret St. Clare were made man and wife.

They proceeded to the vestry; the clergyman leading the way, Frank leading his bride, her arm within his, the ring that bound her to him encircling her finger. After a hunt for the register book, for he did not know where it was kept, Mr. Backup found it, and entered the record of the marriage. Frank affixed his signature, Margaret hers; and then the young clergyman seemed at a stand-still, looking about him helplessly.

"I—ah—there are no witnesses to the marriage," said he. "It is customary ——"

"We must do without them in this case," interrupted Frank, as he laid a fee of five guineas quietly down. "It does not require witnesses to make it legal."

"Well—no—I—I conclude not," hesitated the clergyman, blushing as he glanced at the gold and silver, and thinking how greatly too much it was, and how rich this Mr. Raynor must be.

"And will you do me and my wife a good turn, Mr. Backup," spoke Frank, ingenuously, as he clasped the clergyman's hand, and an irresistible smile of entreaty shone on his attractive face. "*Keep it secret.* I may tell you, now it is done and over, that nobody knows of this marriage. It is, in fact, a stolen one; and just at present we do not wish it to be disclosed. We have our reasons. In a very short while, it will be openly avowed; but until then, we should be glad for it not to be spoken of. I know we may depend upon your kindness."

Leaving the bewildered parson to digest the information, to put off his surplice and to lock up the register book, Frank escorted his bride down the aisle. When she stopped to take up her cloak and parasol, he, knowing there were no lookers-on, save the ancient and empty pews, folded her in his arms and kissed her fervently.

"Oh Frank! Please!—don't!—we are in church, remember." And there, what with agitation and nervous fear, the bride burst into a fit of hysterical tears.

"Daisy! For goodness' sake!—not here. Compose yourself, my love. Oh, pray don't sob like that!"

A moment or two, and she was tolerably calm again. No wonder she had given way. She had literally shaken from head to foot all through the service. A dread of its being interrupted, a nervous terror at what she was doing, held possession of her. Now that it was over, she saw she had done wrong, and wished it undone. Just like all the rest of us! We do wrong first, and bewail it afterwards.

"You remain in here, please Frank: let me go out alone," she said, a sob catching her breath. "It would not do, you know, for us to go out together, lest we might be seen. Good-bye," she added, timidly holding up her hand.

They were between the green baize door now and the outer one. Frank knew as well as she did that it would be imprudent to leave the church together. He took her hand and herself once more to him, and kissed her fifty times.

"God bless and keep you, my darling! I wish I could see you safely home."

Daisy's suggestion, a night or two ago, of their leaving the church by different doors, had to turn out but a pleasant fiction, since the church possessed but one door. She lightly glided through it when

Frank released her, and went towards home by way of the shady road, her veil drawn over her face, her steps fleet. He remained where he was, not showing himself, until she should be at a safe distance.

"If I can but get in without being seen!" thought poor Daisy, her heart beating as she sped along. "Mamma and Lydia will not be downstairs yet, I know; and all may pass over happily.—What a high wind it is!"

The wind was high indeed, carrying Daisy nearly off her feet. It took her cloak and whirled it over her head in the air. As ill-luck had it, terrible ill-luck Daisy thought, who should meet her at that moment but the Trennach dressmaker. She had been to the Mount to try dresses on.

"Mrs. St. Clare is quite in a way about you, Miss Margaret," spoke the young woman, who was not pleased at having had her walk partly for nothing. "They have been searching everywhere for you."

"I did not know you were expected this morning," said poor Daisy, after murmuring some explanation of having "come out for a walk."

"Well, Miss Margaret, your mamma told me to come whenever it was most convenient to me: and that's early morning, or late in the evening, so as not to take me out of my work in the day-time. I thought I might just catch you and Miss St. Clare when you were dressing, and could have tried on my bodies without much trouble to you."

"What bodies are they?" asked Margaret. "I did not know that any were being made."

"They are dresses for travelling, miss. Mrs. St. Clare gave me a pattern of the material she would like, and I have been getting them."

"Oh, for travelling," repeated Margaret, whose mind, what with one thing and another, was in a perfect whirl. "Will you like to go back, and try mine on now?"

But the dressmaker declined the proposition. She was nearer Trennach now than she was to the Mount, and her apprentice had no work to go on with till she got home to set it for her. Appointing the following morning, she continued her way.

Daisy continued hers. It was a most unlucky thing that the dressmaker should have gone to the Mount that morning, of all others! What a fuss there would be! and what excuse could she make for her absence from home? There was but one, as it seemed to Daisy, that she could make—out for a walk.

But the shifting clouds had gathered in one dense black mass overhead, and the rain came pouring down. Daisy had brought no umbrella: nothing but a fashionable parasol about large enough for a doll: one cannot be expected on such an occasion to be as provident as was the renowned Mrs. MacStinger. The wind took Daisy's cloak, as before; the drifting rain half blinded her. Before she reached home,

her pretty muslin dress, and her dainty parasol, and herself also, were wringing wet.

"Now where have you been?" demanded Mrs. St. Clare, pouncing upon Daisy in the hall and backed by Tabitha; while Lydia, who had that morning got up betimes, thanks to the exacting dressmaker, looked on from the door of the breakfast-room.

"I went for a walk," gasped Daisy, fully believing all was about to be discovered. "The rain overtook me."

"What a pickle you are in!" commented Lydia.

"*Where* have you been for a walk?" proceeded Mrs. St. Clare, who was evidently angry.

"Down the road," said Daisy, with a kind of sobbing jerk, the result of emotion and fear. "It—it is pleasant to walk a little before the heat comes on. I—I did not know it was going to rain."

"Pray, how long is it since you found out that it is pleasant to walk a little before the heat comes on?" retorted Mrs. St. Clare, with severe sarcasm. "How many mornings have you tried it?"

"Never before this morning, mamma," replied Daisy, with ready earnestness, for it was the truth.

"*And pray with whom have you been walking?*" put in Lydia, with astounding emphasis. "Who brought you home?"

"Not anyone," choked Daisy, swallowing down her tears. "I walked home by myself. You may ask Mrs. Hunt: she met me. Mamma, may I go up and change my things?"

Mrs. St. Clare said neither yes nor no, but gave tacit permission by stretching out her hand to point to the staircase. Daisy ran the gauntlet of the three faces as she passed on: her mother's was stern, Lydia's supremely scornful, Tabitha's discreetly prim. The two ladies turned into the breakfast parlour, and the maid retired.

"It is easy enough to divine what Daisy has been up to," spoke Lydia, whose speech was not always braced à la mode. She sat back in an easy-chair, sipping her chocolate, a pink cloak trimmed with swansdown drawn over her shoulders; for the rain and the early rising had made her feel chilly.

"Oh, I don't know," said Mrs. St. Clare, in a cross tone. She detested these petty annoyances.

"I do, though," returned Lydia. "Daisy has been out to meet Frank Raynor. Were I you, mamma, I should not allow her so much liberty."

"Give me the sugar, Lydia, and let me have my breakfast in peace."

Daisy, locking her door, burst into a fit of hysterical tears. Her nerves were utterly unstrung. It was necessary to change her wet garments, and she did so, sobbing wofully all the while. She wished she had not done what she had done; she wished that Frank could be by her side to encourage and shield her. When she had completed

her toilet, she took the wedding ring from her finger, attached it to a bit of ribbon, and hid it in her bosom.

"Suppose I should never, never be able to wear it openly?" thought Daisy, with a sob and a sigh. "Suppose Frank and I should never see each other again!—never be able to be together? If mamma carries me off abroad, and he stays here, one of us might die before I came back again."

CHAPTER XII.

UNDER THE EVENING STARS.

"CAN you spare me a moment, Frank?"

"Fifty moments if you like, Edina," was the ready answer in the ever-pleasant tone. "Come in."

The day had gone on to its close, and Edina had found no opportunity of speaking to Frank alone. The secret, of which she had unexpectedly gained cognisance that morning, was consuming her mind. To be a party to it, and to keep that fact from Frank, was impossible to Edina. Tell him, she must: and the sooner the better. After tea, he and the Doctor had sat persistently talking together until dusk, when Frank had to go out to visit a fever-patient in Bleak Row. Running upstairs to change his coat, Edina had thought the opportunity had come, and followed him to his chamber.

She went in after his hearty response to her knock. Frank, quick in all his movements, already had his coat off, and was taking the old one from the peg where it hung. Edina sat down by the drawers.

"Frank," she said in a low tone—and she disliked very much indeed to have to say it, "I chanced to go into the church this morning soon after eight o'clock. I—I saw you there."

"*Did* you?" cried Frank, coming to a pause with his coat half on. "And—did you see anything else, Edina?"

"I believe I saw all there was to see, Frank. I saw you standing with Margaret St. Clare at the altar rails, and Mr. Backup marrying you."

"Well, I never!" cried Frank, with amazing ease and equanimity just the same that he might have maintained had she said she saw him looking on at a christening. "Weren't you surprised, Edina?"

"Surprised, and a great deal more, Frank. Shocked. Grieved."

"I say, though, whatever took you to the church at that early hour, Edina?"

"Chance: it may be said. Though I am one of those, you know, who do not believe such a thing as chance exists. I went after Mrs. Trim, found her house shut up, and thought she might be in the church

cleaning it. Oh, Frank! how could you do anything so desperately imprudent?"

"Well, I hardly know. Don't scold me, Edina."

"I have no right to scold you," she answered. "And scolding would be of no use now the thing is done. Nevertheless, I must tell you what a very wrong step it was to take; lamentably imprudent: and I think you must, yourself, know that it was. I could never have believed it of Margaret St. Clare."

"Do not blame Daisy, Edina. I persuaded her to take it. Mrs. St. Clare has been talking of marching her off abroad; and we wanted, you see, to secure ourselves against separation."

"And what are you going to do, Frank?"

"Oh, nothing," said easy Frank. "Daisy's gone back to the Mount, and I am here as usual. As soon as I can make a home for her, I shall fetch her away."

"Make a home where?"

"In some place where there's a likelihood of a good practice. London, I daresay."

"But how are you to live? A good practice does not spring up in a night, like a mushroom."

"That's arranged," replied Frank, as perfectly confident himself that it was arranged as that Edina was sitting on the low chair, and he settling his shoulders into his coat. "My plans are all laid, Edina, and Uncle Hugh knows what they are—and it was in pursuance of them that I went over to Eagles' Nest. I will tell you about it to-morrow: there's no time now."

"Papa does not know of what took place this morning?"

"Not that. Nobody knows of that. We don't want it known, if we can help it, until the time comes when all the world may know."

"Meaning until you have gained the home, Frank?"

"Meaning until I and Daisy enter upon it," said sanguine Frank.

Edina's hand—her elbow resting on her knee—was raised to support her head: her fingers played absently with her soft brown hair: her dark, thoughtful eyes, gazing before her, seemed to see nothing. Whether it might arise from the fact that in her early days of privation, when Dr. Raynor's means were so narrow, she had become practically acquainted with some dark phases of existence, or whether it was the blight that had been cast on her heart in its sweet spring-time, certain it was, that Edina Raynor was no longer of a sanguine nature. Where Frank saw only sunshine in prospective, she saw shadow. And a great deal of it.

"You should have made sure of the home first."

"Before making sure of Daisy? Not a bit of it, Edina. We shall get along."

"That's just like you, Frank," she exclaimed, petulantly, in her

vexation. "You would as soon marry ten wives as one, the law allowing it, so far as never giving a thought to what you were to do with them."

"But the law would not allow it," laughed Frank.

"It is your great fault—never to think of consequences."

"Time enough for that, Edina, when the consequences come."

She did not make any rejoinder. To what use? Frank Raynor would be Frank Raynor to the end of time. It was his nature.

"It is odd, though, is it not, that you, of all Trennach, should just happen to have caught us!" he exclaimed, alluding to the ceremony of the morning. "But you'll not betray us, will you, Edina?—— I must be off down, or Uncle Hugh will be calling to know what I'm doing."

Edina rose, with a sigh. "No, I will not betray you, Frank: you know there is no danger of that: and if I can help you and Daisy in any way, I will do it. I was obliged to tell you what I had seen. I could not keep from you the fact that it had come to my knowledge."

As Frank leaped downstairs, lighted-hearted as a boy, Dr. Raynor was crossing from the sitting-room to the surgery. He halted to speak.

"I forgot to tell you, Frank, that you may as well call this evening on Dame Bell: you will be passing her door."

"Is Dame Bell ill again?" asked Frank.

"I fear so. A woman came for some medicine for her to-day."

"I thought she was at Falmouth."

"She is back again, it seems. Call and see her as you go along: you have plenty of time."

"Very well, Uncle Hugh."

The Bare Plain might be said to deserve its name very especially this evening as Frank traversed it. In the morning the wind had been high, but nothing to what it was now. It played amid the openings surrounding the Bottomless Shaft, going in with a whirr, coming out with a rush, and shrieked and moaned fearfully. The popular belief indulged in by the miners was, that this unearthly shrieking and moaning, which generally disturbed the air on these boisterous nights, proceeded not from the wind, but from Dan Sandon's ghost. Frank Raynor had no faith in the ghost—Dan Sandon's, or any other—but he shuddered as he hastened by.

The illness (more incipient than declared) from which Mrs. Bell had been suffering, seemed to cease with her trouble. Her husband's mysterious disappearance was followed by much necessary exertion, both of mind and body, on her own part; and her ailments nearly left her. Dr. Raynor suspected—perhaps knew—that the improvement was but temporary: but he did not tell her so. Dame Bell moved briskly about her house, providing for the comforts of her lodgers, and waiting for the husband who did not come.

Rosaline did not come, either. And her prolonged absence seemed to her mother most unaccountable, her excuses for it unreasonable. As the days and the weeks had gone on, and Rosaline's return seemed to be no nearer than ever, Dame Bell grew angry. She at length made up her mind to go to Falmouth, and bring back the runaway with her own hands.

Easier said than done, that: as Mrs. Bell found. When she, after two days' absence, returned to her home on the Bare Plain, she returned alone: her daughter was not with her. This was only a few days ago. The dame had been ailing ever since, some of the old symptoms having come back again—the result perhaps of the travelling—and she had that day sent a neighbour to Dr. Raynor's for some medicine.

Frank Raynor made the best of his way across the windy plain, leaving the moans and shrieks behind him, and lifted the latch of Dame Bell's door. She stood at the table, ironing by candle-light, her feet upon an old mat to keep them from the draught of the door. Frank, making himself at home as usual, sat down by the ironing board, telling her to go on with her occupation, and inquired into her ailments.

"You ought not to have taken the journey, mother," said Frank, promptly, when the questions and answers were over. "Travelling is not good for you."

"But I could not help taking it," returned Dame Bell, shaking out a coarse whitey-brown shirt belonging to one of her lodgers, and beginning upon its wristbands. "When Rosaline never came home, and paid no attention to my ordering her to come, it was time I went after her, to bring her back."

"She has not come back?"

"No, she has not," retorted Dame Bell, ironing away at so vicious a rate that it seemed a marvel the wristbands did not come off the shirt. "I couldn't get her to come, Mr. Frank. Cords wouldn't have dragged her. Of all the idiots!—to let those Whistlers frighten her away from a place for good, like that!"

"The Whistlers?" mechanically repeated Frank, his eyes, just as mechanically, fixed on the progress of the ironing.

"It's they Whistlers, and nothing else," said Mrs. Bell. "I didn't send word to her or her aunt that I was on the road to Falmouth: I thought I'd take 'em by surprise. And I declare to you, Mr. Frank, I hardly believed my eyes when I saw Rosaline. It did give me a turn. I was that shocked——"

"But why?" interrupted Frank.

"She's just as thin as a herring. You wouldn't know her, sir. When I got to the place, there was John Pellet's shop-window all alight with a big gas flame inside, a-lighting up the tins and fire-irons, and that, which he shows in it. I opened the side door, and went straight up

the stairs to the room overhead, knowing I should most likely find Rosaline there, for it's the room my sister (Pellet's wife) does her millinery work in. My sister was there, standing up with her back to me, a bonnet lodged on each of her two outstretched hands, as if she was comparing the blue bows in one with the pink bows in t'other; and close at the middle table, putting some flowers in another bonnet, was a young woman in black. I didn't know her at first. The gas was right on her face, but I didn't know her. She looked straight over at me, and I thought what a white and thin and pretty face it was, with large violet eyes and dark circles round 'em: but as true as you are there, Mr. Frank, I didn't know her for Rosaline. 'Mother!' says she, standing up: and I a'most fell down on the nearest chair. 'Whatever has come to you, child?' I says, as she steps round to kiss me; 'you look as though you had one foot in the grave, and the other out of it.' At that she turns as red as a rose: and what with the bright colour, and the smile she gave, she looked a little more like herself. But there: if I talked till I tired you, sir, I could make out no more than that: she's looking desperately ill and wretched, and she won't come home again."

Frank made no rejoinder. The ironing went on vigorously: and Mrs. Bell's narrative with it.

"All I could say was of no use: back with me she'd not consent to come. All her aunt could say was of no use. For when she found how lonely I was at home here, and how much I wanted Rosaline, my sister, though loth to part with her, said nature was nature, and a girl should not go against her mother. But no persuasion would bring Rosaline to reason: she'd live with me, and glad to, she said, if I'd go and stay at Falmouth, but she could not come back to Trennach. Pellet and Pellet's wife both tried to turn her: all in vain."

"Did she give any reason for not coming?" questioned Frank: and one, more observant than Dame Bell, might have been struck with the low, subdued tone he spoke in.

"She didn't give any reason, of her own accord, Mr. Frank, but I got it out of her. 'What has Trennach done to you, and what has the old house on the Plain done to you, that you should be frightened at it?' I said to her. For it's easy enough to be gathered that she is frightened in her mind, Mr. Frank, and Pellet's wife had noticed the same ever since she went there. 'Don't say such things, mother,' says she, 'it is nothing.' 'But I will say it,' says I to her, 'and I know what the cause of it is—just the fright you got that Tuesday night from they Seven Whistlers, and a fear that you might hear them again if you came back; and a fine simpleton you must be for your pains!' And so she is."

"Ah yes, the Seven Whistlers," repeated Frank, absently.

"She could not contradict me. She only bursts into tears and begs

of me not to talk of 'em. Not talk, indeed! I could have shook her, I could!"

"We cannot always help our fears," said Frank.

"But for a girl to let they sounds (which nobody yet has found out the top or the tail of, or what they be) scare her out of house and home and country, is downright folly," pursued Dame Bell, unable to relinquish the theme, and splitting the button of the shirt collar in two at one stroke of the hasty iron. "And she must fright and fret herself into a skeleton besides!—Bother take these bone buttons! they be always a-snapping.—But there," she resumed, in an easier tone, after folding the shirt, "I suppose she can't help it. Her father was just as much afraid of 'em. He never had an atom o' fresh colour in his face from the Sunday night he heard they Whistlers till the Tuesday night when he disappeared. It had a curious grey look on it all the while."

Frank rose. He remembered the grey look well enough. "If Rosaline likes Falmouth best she is better there, Mrs. Bell. I should not press her to return."

"If pressing would do any good, she'd get her share of it," rejoined Mrs. Bell, obstinately. "But it won't. I did press, for the matter of that. When I'd done pressing on my own score, I put it on the score of her father. 'Don't you care to be at home to welcome your poor lost father when he gets back to it—for back he's sure to come, says I, 'sooner or later:' and I'm sure my eyes ran down tears as I spoke. But no: she just turned as white as the grave, Mr. Frank, and shook her head in a certain solemn way of hers, which she must have picked up at Falmouth: and I saw it was of no use, though I talked till doomsday. There she stops, and there she will stop, and I must make the best of it. And I wish they evil Whistlers had been in the sea!"

Frank was in a hurry to depart: but she went on again, after taking breath.

"She is earning money there, and her aunt is glad to have her and takes care of her, and she says she never saw any girl so expert with her fingers and display such taste as Rosaline. But that don't mend the matter here, Mr. Frank, and is no excuse for her being such a goose. 'Come and take a room at Falmouth, mother,' says she, when I was leaving. But I'd like to know what a poor body like me could do in that strange place."

"Well, good evening, Mrs. Bell," said Frank, escaping to the door.

But the loquacious tongue had not finished yet.

"When I was coming back in the train, Mr. Frank, the thought kept running into my mind that perhaps Bell would have got home while I'd been away: and when I looked round the empty house, and he wasn't here, I had a queer feeling of disappointment. Do you think he ever will come, sir?"

Some "queer feeling" seemed to take Frank at the question, and stop his breath. He spoke a few words indistinctly in answer. But Mrs Bell did not catch them.

"And whether it was through that—the expecting to see him and the consequent disappointment—I don't know, Mr. Frank; but since then I can't get him out of my mind. Day and night, Bell is in it. I'm beginning to dream of him; and that's what I've not done yet. Nancy Tomson says that's a good sign. Should you say it was, sir?"

"I—really don't know," was Frank's unsatisfactory reply. And he succeeded in making his exit with the words.

"I *wish* she'd not bring up her husband to me!" he cried to himself, lifting his hat that his brow might get a little of the fresh wind, which blew less fiercely under these cottages. "Somehow she nearly always does do it. I hate to cross the threshold."

A week or two went on: a week or two of charming weather and calm blue skies. The day, fixed for the departure of Mrs. St. Clare from the Mount, came and passed, and she was still in her home, and likely to be in it for some time to come. "Man proposes, but Heaven disposes." Every day of our lives, we learn fresh proofs of that great fact.

On the very day of Daisy's impromptu wedding, her sister Lydia showed herself more than usually ailing and grumbling. She felt cold and shivery, and sat in the pink cloak all day. The next morning she seemed really ill, not fancifully so, was hot and cold alternately: and Dr. Raynor was sent for. The attack turned out to be one of fever. Not as yet of infectious fever—and Dr. Raynor hoped he should prevent its going on to that. But it was rather severe, and required careful watching and nursing.

Of course their departure for foreign lands was out of the question. They could not leave the Mount. Mrs. St. Clare, who was very anxious, for she dreaded infectious fever more than anything else, spent most of her time in Lydia's room. Once in a way, Frank Raynor appeared at the Mount in his uncle's place. Dr. Raynor was given fully to understand that his own attendance was requested, not his nephew's: but he was himself getting to feel worse day by day; he could not always get over, walking or riding; and on those occasions Frank went instead. Mrs. St. Clare allowed what, as it appeared, there was no remedy for, and was coldly civil to the young doctor.

But this illness of Lydia's, and Mrs. St. Clare's close attendance in her room, gave more liberty to Daisy. Scarcely an evening passed but she, unsuspected and unwatched, was pacing the shrubberies and the secluded parts of that wilderness of a garden with him—Frank Raynor. There, arm in arm, they walked, and talked together of the hopeful

future; and the hours seemed to be enchanted, and to fly on golden wings.

"Love took up the glass of time, and turned it in his glowing hands,
Every moment, lightly shaken, ran itself in golden sands.
Love took up the harp of life, and smote on all its chords with might,
Smote the chord of self, which, trembling, passed with music out of sight."

Whatever of reality, of fruition, the future might bring forth, it could never be to them what this present time was, when they wandered together in the sweet moonlight, with the scent of the night flowers around them, and the soft sighing wind, and the hearts' romance.

Never an evening but Daisy stole out to watch from the sheltered gate for the coming of her lover; scarcely an evening that Frank failed to come. When he did fail, it was unavoidable. Daisy would linger and linger on, waiting and watching, even when all sensible hope of his coming must have died out; and when compelled to return indoors with a reluctant step, she would think fate cruel to her, and sigh heavily.

"The time may come when we shall live with each other and be together always, in place of just this little evening walk up and down the paths—and oh! how I wish the time was come!" would say poor Daisy to her own heart.

One evening it was Daisy who failed to be at the trysting-place. Lydia was getting better, was able to sit up a little, morning and evening. The greater danger, feared for her, had been prevented: and under her own good constitution—for she had one, in spite of her grumblings and her imaginary ailments—and Dr. Raynor's successful treatment, she was recovering rapidly. This evening, lying back in an easy-chair, it had pleased her to order Daisy to read to her. Daisy complied willingly: she was ever more ready to help Lydia than Lydia was to accept her help: but when a considerable spell of reading had been got through, and the room was growing dim, Daisy, coming to the end of a chapter, closed the book.

"What's that for?" asked Lydia, sharply, whose fractiousness was coming back to her with her advance towards convalescence. "Read on, please."

"It is getting dusk," said Daisy.

"Dusk for that large print!—nonsense," retorted Lydia. The book was a popular novel, and she felt interested in it.

"I am tired, Lydia: you don't consider how long I have been reading," cried Daisy, fretting inwardly: for the twilight hour was her lover's signal for approach, and she knew he must be already waiting for her.

"You have only read since dinner," debated Lydia: "not much more than an hour, I'm sure. Go on."

So Daisy was obliged to go on. She dared not display too much anxiety to get away, lest it might betray to them that she had some

motive for wishing it. A secret makes us terribly self-conscious. But by-and-by it did really become too dark to see even the large print of the fashionable novel of the present day, and Lydia exhibited signs of weariness; and Mrs. St. Clare, who had been dozing in another arm-chair, woke up and said Lydia must not listen longer. Daisy ran down to the yellow-room, and sped swiftly through the open glass doors.

It was nearly as dark as it would be. The stars were shining; a lovely opal colour, fading below into green, lingered yet in the west. Frank Raynor, hands in pockets, and whistling softly under his breath, stood in the sheltered walk. A broadish walk, wherethe trees met overhead. Daisy flung herself into his arms, and burst into tears. Tried almost beyond bearing by her forced detention, it was thus her emotion, combined perhaps with a little temper, expended itself.

"Why, Daisy! What in the world is the matter?"

"I could not get to you, Frank. Lydia kept me in, reading to her, all this while."

"Never mind, my darling, now you have come."

"I thought you would go away; I feared you might think I forgot, or something," sighed Daisy.

"As if I could think that! Dry your eyes, my dear one."

Stealing her arm within his own, Frank led her forward, and they began, as usual, to pace the walk. It was their favourite promenade; for it was so retired and sheltered that they felt pretty safe from intruders. There, linked arm-in-arm, or with Frank's arm round her waist, as might be, they paced to and fro; the friendly stars, like twinkling silver, shining down upon them through the branches overhead.

Their theme was ever the same—the future. The hopeful future, that to their eyes looked brighter than those glistening stars. What was it to be for them, and how might they, in their enthusiasm, plan it out? In what manner could Frank best proceed, so as to secure speedily a home-tent, and be able to declare to the world that he and Margaret St. Clare had spent a quarter of an hour in the grey old church at Trennach one windy morning, when he had earned the right to take her away with him and cherish her for life.

To this end the whole of their consultations tended; on this one desirable project all their deliberations centred. The sooner Frank could get away from Trennach, the sooner (as they both so cheerily believed) it would be realized. Never a shadow of doubt crossed either of them in regard to it. Frank was too sanguine, Daisy too inexperienced, to see any dubious clouds. The days to come were to be days of brightness: and both of them were supremely unconscious that such days never come back after the swift passing of life's fair first morning.

"You see, Daisy, the delay is not my fault," spoke Frank. "My uncle has been so very unwell this last week or two, that I don't like

to urge the change upon him. Only to-day I said to him, 'You know I am wanting to leave you, Uncle Hugh,' and his reply was, 'Don't speak of it just immediately, Frank: let things be as they are a very little longer.' While he is feeling so ill, I scarcely like to worry him."

"Of course not," said Daisy. "And as long as I can walk about here with you every evening, Frank, I don't care how long things go on as they are now. It was different when I feared mamma was going to carry me off to the end of the world. It was only that fear, you know, Frank, that made me consent to do what I did that morning. I'm sure I tremble yet when I think how wrong and hazardous it was. Anybody might have come into the church."

"Where's your wedding ring, Daisy?" he asked: and it may as well be said that he had never told her somebody did come in.

"Here," she answered, touching the bosom of her dress. "It is always there, Frank."

"I have written to-day to a friend of mine in London, Daisy, asking him if he knows of any good opening for me—or of any old practitioner in a first-class quarter who may be likely to want some younger man to help him. I daresay I shall get an answer, with some news in it, in a day or two."

"I daresay you will. Who is he, Frank?"

"A young fellow named Crisp, with the best heart in the world. He——"

A sudden clutching of his arm by Daisy, just after they had turned in their walk; a visible shrinking of her frame, as if she would hide herself behind him; and a faint idea that he saw some slight movement of the foliage at the other end of the avenue, stopped Frank's further words.

"Did you see, Frank?" she whispered. "Did you see?"

"I fancied something stirred, down yonder. What was it?"

"It was Tabitha. I am certain of it. I saw her the moment we turned. She might have been watching us ever so long: all the way up the walk. Oh, Frank, what shall I do? She will go in and tell mamma."

"Let her," said Frank. "The worst she can say is, that we were walking arm-in-arm and talking confidentially. I cannot think why you need be so fearful, Daisy. Your mother must know that we do meet out here, and tacitly sanction it. She used to know it, and sanction it too."

Daisy sighed. Yes, she thought her mother might, at any rate, suspect that they met. It was not so much *that* which Daisy feared. But, he one private act she had been guilty of lay heavily on her conscience; and she was ever haunted with the dread that any fresh movement would lead to its betrayal.

Saying good-night to each other, for it was growing late, Frank

departed, and Daisy went in. Her mother was shut up in the drawing-room, and she went on straight to her sister's chamber. There an unpleasant scene awaited her. Lydia, not yet in bed—for she had refused to go, and had abused Tabitha for urging it, lay back still in the easy-chair. Could looks have annihilated, Daisy would certainly have sunk from those cast on her by Lydia, as she entered.

And then the storm began. Lydia reproached her in no measured terms, and with utter scorn of tone and manner, for the "clandestine intimacy," as she was pleased to call it, that she, Daisy, was carrying on with Frank Raynor.

It appeared that after the candles were lighted, and Mrs. St. Clare had gone down, Lydia, declining to go to bed, and wanting to be amused, required Daisy to read to her again. Tabitha was sent in search of Daisy, and came back saying she could not find her anywhere: she was not downstairs, she was not in her chamber. "Go and look in the garden, you stupid thing," retorted Lydia: "you know Miss Daisy's for ever out there." Tabitha—who was a meek woman in demeanour, and took abuse humbly—went to the garden as directed, searched about, and at length came upon Miss Daisy in the avenue, pacing it on the arm of Mr. Raynor. Back she went, and reported it to Lydia. And now Lydia was reproaching her.

"To suffer yourself to meet that man clandestinely after night has fallen!" reiterated Lydia. "And to stay out with him!—and to hang upon his arm! You disgraceful girl! And when, all the while, he does not care one jot for *you!* He loves somebody else."

Daisy had received the tirade on herself in silence, but she fired up at this. "You have no right to say *that*, Lydia," she cried. "Whether he loves me, or not, I shall not say, but at any rate, he does not love anyone else."

"Yes, he does," affirmed Lydia.

"He does not," fired Daisy. "If he does, who is it?"

"Nobody in his own station—more shame to him!—It is that girl they call so beautiful—who lost her father. Rose—Rose—what's the name?—Rosaline Bell. Frank Raynor loves her with his whole heart and soul."

"Lydia, how dare you say such a thing?"

"*I* don't say it. I only repeat it. Ask Trennach. It is known all about the place. They used to be always together—walking on the Bare Plain by night. The girl is gone away for a time; and the gentleman, during her absence, amuses himself with you. Makes love to you to keep his hand in."

Daisy's heart turned sick and faint within her. Not at Lydia's supreme sarcasm, but at the horrible conviction that there must be something in the tale. She remembered that past evening at the dinner-table—and the recollection came rushing into her mind like a barbed

dart—when Sir Arthur Beauchamp and others were questioning Frank about this very girl and her beauty, and she—Daisy—had been struck with the emotion he betrayed; with his evidently shrinking manner, with the changing hue of his face. Did he in truth love this girl, Rosaline Bell?—and was she so very beautiful?

"How did you hear this, Lydia?" asked Daisy, in a tone from which all spirit was quenched.

"I heard it from Tabitha. She knows about it. You can ask her for yourself."

And Daisy did ask. As it chanced, the maid at that moment entered the room with some beef-tea for Lydia; and Daisy, suppressing her pride and her reticence, condescended to question her. Tabitha answered freely and readily, as if there were nothing in the subject to conceal, and with a palpable belief in its truth that told terribly upon Daisy. In fact, the woman did herself implicitly believe it. Mr. Blase Pellet had once favoured her with his version of the story, and Tabitha never supposed that that version existed in Mr. Pellet's own suspicious imagination, and in that alone.

"I—don't think it can be *true*, Tabitha," faltered poor Daisy, her heart beating wildly. "She was not a lady."

"It's true enough, Miss Margaret. Blase Pellet wanted her for himself, but she'd have nothing to say to him—or to anybody else except Mr. Raynor. Pellet is related to the Bells, and knew all about it. What he said to me was this: 'Raynor's after her for ever, day and night, and she worships the ground he treads on!' Those were his very words, Miss Margaret."

Margaret, turning hot and cold, and red and white, made her escape from the room and took refuge in her own. In that first moment of awakening, she felt as though her heart must burst with its bitter pain. Jealousy, baleful jealousy, had taken possession of her: and there is no other passion in this life that can prey upon our bosoms so relentlessly, or touch them with so keen a sting.

(*To be continued.*)

KETIRA THE GIPSY.

YOU would not have known the place again. Virginia Cottage, the unpretending little homestead, had been converted into a mansion. Hyde Stockhausen had built a new wing at one end, and a conservatory at the other; and had put pillars before the rustic porch, over which the Virginia creeper climbed.

We heard last month about Ketira the Gipsy: and of the unaccountable disappearance of her daughter, Kettie; and of the indignant anger displayed by Hyde Stockhausen when it was suggested that he might have kidnapped her. Curiously enough, within a few days of that time, Hyde himself disappeared from Church Dykely: not in the mysterious manner that Kettie had, but openly and with intention.

The inducing cause of Hyde's leaving, as was stated and believed, was a quarrel with his stepfather, Massock. It chanced that the monthly settling-day, connected with the brickfields, fell just after Kettie vanished. Massock came over for it as usual, and was overbearing as usual; and perhaps Hyde, already in a state of inward irritation, was less forbearing than usual. Any way, ill-words arose between them. Massock accused Hyde of neglecting his interests, and of being too much of a gentleman to look after the work and the men. Hyde retorted: one word led to another, and there ensued a serious quarrel. The upshot was, that Hyde threw up his post. Vowing he would never again have anything to do with old Massock or his precious bricks as long as he lived, he packed up a small portmanteau and quitted Church Dykely there and then, to the intense tribulation of his ancient nurse and servant, Deborah Preen.

"Leave him alone," said Massock roughly. "He'll be back safe enough in a day or two."

"Where is he gone?" asked Ketira the Gipsy: who, hovering still around Virginia Cottage, had seen Hyde's exit with his portmanteau.

Massock stared at her, and at her red cloak: she had penetrated to his presence to ask the question. He had never before seen Ketira; never heard of her.

"What is it to you?" he demanded, in his coarse manner. "Who are *you?* Do you come here to tell his fortune? Be off, old witch!"

"His fortune may be told sooner than you care to hear it—if you are anything to him," was the gipsy's answer. And that same night she quitted Church Dykely herself, wandering away to be lost in the "wide wide world."

Massock's opinion, that Hyde would return in a day or two, proved

to be a mistaken one. Rimmer, at the Silver Bear, got a letter from a lawyer in Worcester, asking him to release Mr. Stockhausen from Virginia Cottage—which Hyde had taken for three years. But, this, Rimmer refused to do. So Hyde had to make the best of his bargain: and every quarter, as the quarters went on, the rent was punctually remitted to Henry Rimmer by the lawyer: who gave, however, no clue to his client's place of abode. It was said that Hyde had been reconciled to his uncle, Parson Hyde (now getting into his dotage), and was by him supplied with funds.

One fine evening, however, in the late spring, when not very far short of a twelvemonth had elapsed, Hyde astonished Deborah Preen by his return. After a fit of crying to show her joy, Deborah brought him in some supper and stood by while he ate it, telling him the news of what had transpired in the village since he left.

"Are those beautiful brickfields being worked still?" he asked.

"'Deed but they are then, Master Hyde. A sight o' bricks seems to be made at 'em. Pitt the foreman, he have took your place as manager, sir, and keeps the accounts."

"Good luck to him!" said Hyde, drinking a glass of ale. "That queer old lady in the red cloak: what has become of her?"

"What, that gipsy hag?" cried Preen. "She's dead, sir."

"Dead!"

"Yes, sir, dead: and a good riddance, too. She went away the very night you went, Mr. Hyde, and never came back again. A week or two ago Abel Carew got news that she was dead."

(Shortly before this, some wandering gipsies had set up their camp within a mile or two of Church Dykely. Abel Carew, never having had news of Ketira since her departure, went to them to make inquiries. At first the gipsies seemed not to understand of whom he was speaking; but upon his making Ketira clear to them, they told him she had been dead about a month; of her daughter, Kettie, they knew nothing.)

"She's not much loss," observed Hyde in answer to Deborah: and his face took a brighter look, as though the news were a relief—Preen noticed it. "The old gipsy was as mad as a March hare."

"And ten times more troublesome than one," put in Preen. "Be you come home to stay, master?"

"I daresay I shall," replied Hyde. "As good settle down here as elsewhere: and there'd be no fun in paying two rents."

So we had Hyde Stockhausen amidst us once more. He did not intend to take up with brickmaking again, but to live as a gentleman. His uncle made him an allowance, and he was going to be married. Abel Carew questioned him about Kettie one day when they met on the common, asking whether he had seen her. Never, was the reply of Hyde. So that what with the girl's prolonged disappearance and

her mother's death, it was assumed that we had done with the two gipsies for ever.

Hyde was engaged to a Miss Peyton. A young lady just left an orphan, whom he had met only six weeks ago at some sea-side place. He had fallen in love with her at first sight, and she with him. She had two or three hundred a year: and Hyde, there was little doubt, would come into all his uncle's money; so he saw no reason why he should not make Virginia Cottage comfortable for her, and went off to the Silver Bear, to talk to Henry Rimmer about it.

The result was, that improvements were put in hand without delay. A wing (consisting of a handsome drawing-room down stairs, and a bed and dressing-room above) was added to the cottage on one side; on the other side, Hyde built a conservatory. The house was also generally embellished and set in order, and some new furniture brought in. And I think if ever workmen worked quickly, these did; for the alterations seemed no sooner to be begun than they were done.

"So you have sown your wild oats, Master Hyde," remarked the squire one day in passing, as he stood to watch the finishing touches, then being put to the outside of the house.

"Don't know that I ever had many to sow, sir," said Hyde, nodding to me.

"And what sort of a young lady is this wife that you are about to bring home?" went on the Pater.

Hyde's face took a warm flush and his lips parted with a half smile; which proved what she was to him. "You will see, sir," he said in answer.

"When is the wedding to be?"

"This day week."

"This day week!" echoed the Squire surprised: and Hyde, who seemed to have spoken incautiously, looked vexed.

"I did not intend to say as much; my thoughts were elsewhere," he observed. "Don't mention it again, Mr. Todhetley. Even old Deborah has not been told."

"I'll take care, lad. But it is known all over the place that the wedding is close at hand."

"Yes: but not the day."

"When do you go away for it?"

"On Saturday."

"Well, good luck to you, lad! By the way, Hyde," continued the Squire, "what did they do about that drain in the yard? Put a new pipe?"

"Yes," said Hyde, "and they have made a very good job of it. Will you come and see it?"

Pipes and drains held no attraction for me. While the Pater went through the house to the yard, I strolled outside the front gate and

cross to the little coppice to wait for him. It was shady there: the ot midsummer sun was ablaze to-day.

And I declare that a feather might almost have knocked me down. here, amidst the trees of the coppice, like a picture framed round by reen leaves, stood Ketira the gipsy. Or Ketira's ghost.

Believing that she was dead and buried, I might have believed it e the latter, but for the red cloth cloak: *that* was real. She was taring at Hyde's house with all the fire of her glittering eyes, looking s though she were consumed by some inward fever.

"Who lives there now?" she abruptly asked me without any other reeting, pointing her yellow forefinger at the house.

"The cottage was empty ever so long," I carelessly said, some instinct rompting me not to tell too much. "Lately the workmen have been aking alterations in it. How is Kettie? Have you found her?"

She lifted her two hands aloft with a gesture of despair: but left me nanswered. "These alterations: by whom are they made?"

But the sight of the Squire, coming forth alone, served as an excuse or my making off. I gave her a parting nod, saying I was glad to see er again in the land of the living.

"Ketira the gipsy is here, sir."

"No!" cried the Pater in amazement. "Why do you say that ohnny?"

"She is there in the coppice."

"Nonsense, lad! Ketira's dead, you know."

"But I have just seen her, and spoken to her."

"Then what did those gipsy-tramps mean by telling Abel Carew at she had died?" cried the Squire explosively, as he marched across ie few yards of greensward towards the coppice.

"Abel did not feel quite sure at the time that he and they were not alking of two persons. That must have been the case, sir."

We were too late. Ketira was already half-way along the path that ed to the common: no doubt on her road to pay a visit to Abel arew. And I can only relate what passed there at second hand. etween ourselves, Ketira was no favourite of his.

He was at his early dinner of bread and butter and salad when she alked in and astonished him. Abel, getting over his surprise, invited er to partake of the meal; but she just waved her hand in refusal, as uch as to say that she was superior to dinner and dinner-eating.

"Have you found Kettie?" was his next question.

"It is the first time a search of mine ever failed," she replied, beinning to pace the little room in agitation, just as a tiger paces its onfined cage. "I have given myself neither rest nor peace since I et out upon it; but it has not brought me tidings of my child."

"It must have been a weary task for you, Ketira. I wish you would reak bread with me."

"I was helped."

"Helped!" repeated Abel. "Helped by what?"

"I know not yet, whether angel or devil. It has been one or th other:—according as he has, or has not, played me false."

"As who has played you false?"

"Of whom do you suppose I speak but *him?*" she retorted, stand ing to confront Abel with her deep eyes. "Hyde Stockhausen has i some subtle manner evaded me: but I shall find him yet."

"Hyde Stockhausen is back here," quietly observed Abel.

"Back here! Then it is no false instinct that has led *me* here," sh added in a low tone, apparently communing with herself. "Is Ketir with him?"

"No, no," said Abel, vexed at the question. "Kettie has neve come back to the place since she left it."

"When did *he* come?"

"It must be about two months ago."

"He is in the same dwelling-house as before! For what is he makin it so grand?"

"It is said to be against his marriage."

"His marriage with Ketira?"

"With a Miss Peyton; some young lady he has met. Why do yo bring up Ketira's name in conjunction with this matter—or with him?"

She turned to the open casement, and stood there, as if to inhal the sweet scent of Abel's flowers, and listen to the hum of his bees Her face was working, her strange eyes were gleaming, her hands wer clasped to pain.

"I know what I know, Abel Carew. Let him look to it if he bring home any other wife than my Ketira."

"Nay," remonstrated peaceful old Abel. "Because a young ma has whispered pretty words in a maiden's ear, and given her, it may be a moonlight kiss, that does not bind him to marry her."

"And would I have wished to bind him had it ended there?" flashed the gipsy. "No; I should have been thankful that it *had* s ended. I hated him from the first."

"You have no proof that it did not so end, Ketira."

"No proof; none," she assented. "No tangible proof that I coul give to you, her father's brother, or to others. But the proof lies i the fatal signs that show themselves to me continually, and in th unerring instinct of my own heart. If the man puts another into th place that ought to be hers, let him look to it."

"You may be mistaken, Ketira. I know not what the signs yo speak of can be: they may show themselves to you but to mislead and nothing is more deceptive than the fancies of one's imagination Be it as it may, vengeance does not belong to us. Do not *you* pu yourself forward to work young Stockhausen ill."

"I work him ill!" retorted the gipsy. "You are mistaking me altogether. It is not I who shall work it. I only see it—and foretell it."

"Nay, why speak so strangely, Ketira? It cannot be that you ——"

"Abel Carew, talk not to me of matters that you do not understand," she interrupted. "I know what I know. Things that I am able to see are hidden from you."

He shook his head. "It is wrong to speak so of Hyde Stockhausen—or of anyone. He may be as innocent in the matter as you or I."

"But I tell you that he is not. And the conviction of it lies here"—striking herself fiercely on the breast.

Abel sighed, and began to put his dinner-plates together. He could not make any impression upon her, or on the notion she had taken up.

"Do you know what it is to have a breaking heart, Abel Carew?" she asked, her voice taking a softer tone that seemed to change it into a piteous wailing. "A broken heart one can bear; for all struggle is over, and one has but to put one's head down on the green earth and die. But a breaking heart means continuous suffering; a perpetual torture that slowly saps away the life; a never-ending aching of soul and of spirit, than which nothing in this world can be so hard to battle with. And for twelve months now this anguish has been mine!"

Poor Ketira! Mistaken or not mistaken, there could be no question that her trouble was grievous to bear; the suspense, in which her days were passed, well-nigh unendurable.

This, that I have told, occurred on Thursday morning. Ketira quitted Abel Carew only to bend her steps back towards Virginia Cottage, and stayed hovering around the house that day and the next. One or another, passing, saw her watching it perpetually, herself partly hidden. Now peeping out from the little coppice; now tramping quickly past the gate, as though she were starting off on a three-mile walk; now stealing to the back of the house, to gaze at the windows. There she might be seen, in one place or another, like a haunting red dragon: her object, as was supposed, being to get speech of Hyde Stockhausen. She did not succeed. Twice she went boldly to the door, knocked, and asked for him. Deborah Preen slammed it in her face. It was thought that Hyde, who then knew of her return and that the report of her death was false, must be on the watch also, to avoid her. If he wanted to go abroad and she was posted at the back, he slipped out in front: when he wished to get in again and caught sight of her red cloak illumining the coppice, he made a dash in at the back gate, and was lost amid the kidney beans.

By this time the state of affairs was known to Church Dykely: a rare dish of nuts for the quiet place to crack. Those of us wh

possessed liberty made pleas for passing by Virginia Cottage to see the fun. Not that there was much to see, except a glimpse of the red cloak in this odd spot or in that.

"Stockhausen must be silly!" cried the Squire. "Why does he not openly see the poor woman and inquire what it is she wants with him? The idea of his shunning her in this absurd way! What does he mean by it, I wonder?"

Now, before telling more, I wish to halt and say a word. That much ridicule will be cast on this story by the intelligent reader, is as sure as that apples grow in summer. Nevertheless, I am but relating what took place. Certain things in it were curiously strange; not at all explainable hitherto; possibly never to be explained. I chanced to be personally mixed up with it, so to say, in a degree; from its beginning, when Ketira and her daughter first appeared at Abel Carew's, to its ending, which has yet to be told. For that much I can vouch—I mean what I was present at. But you need not accord belief to the whole unless you like.

Chance, and nothing else, caused me to be sent over this same evening to Mr. Duffham's. It was Friday, you understand; and the eve of the day Hyde Stockhausen would depart preparatory to his marriage. One of our maids had been ailing for some days with what was thought to be a bad cold: as she did not get better, but grew more feverish, Mrs. Todhetley decided to send for the doctor, if only as a measure of precaution.

"You can go over to Mr. Duffham's for me, Johnny," she said, as we got up from tea—which meal was generally taken at the manor close upon dinner, somewhat after the fashion that the French take their tasse de café. "Ask him if he will be so kind as to call in to see Ann when he is out to-morrow morning."

Nothing loth was I. The evening was glorious, tempting the world out of doors, calm and beautiful, but very hot yet. The direct way to Duffham's from our house was not by Virginia Cottage: but, as a matter of course, I took it. Going along at tip-top speed until I came within sight of it, I then slackened to a snail's pace, the better to take observations.

There's an old saying, that virtue is its own reward. If any virtue existed in my choosing this circuitous and agreeable route, I can only say that for once the promise was at fault, for I was *not* rewarded. Were Hyde Stockhausen's house a prison, it could not have been much more closely shut up. The windows were closed on that lovely midsummer night; the doors looked tight as wax. Not a glimpse could I catch of as much as the bow of Deborah Preen's mob cap atop of the short bedroom blinds; and Hyde might have been over in Africa for all that could be seen of him.

Neither (for a wonder) was there any trace of Ketira the gipsy.

Her red cloak was nowhere. Had she obtained speech of Hyde, and so terminated her watch, or had she given it up in despair? Any way, there was nothing to reward me for having come that much out of my road, and I went on, whistling dolorously.

But, hardly had I got past the premises and was well on the field path beyond, when I met Duffham. Giving him the message from home, which he said he would attend to, I enlarged on the disappointment just experienced in seeing nothing of anybody.

"Shut up like a jail, is it?" quoth Duffham. "I have just had a note from Stockhausen, asking me to call there. His throat's troubling him again, he says: wants me to give him something that will cure him by to-morrow."

I had turned with the doctor, and went walking with him up the garden, listening to what he said. But I meant to leave him when we reached the door. He began trying it. It was fastened inside.

"I daresay you can come in and see Hyde, Johnny. What do you want with him?"

"Not much; only to wish him good luck."

"Is your master afraid of thieves that he bolts his doors?" cried Duffham to old Preen when she let us in.

"'Twas me fastened it, sir; not master," was her reply. "That gipsy wretch have been about yesterday and to-day, wanting to get in. I've got my silver about, and don't want it stolen. Mr. Hyde's mother and Massock have been here to dinner; they've not long gone."

Decanters and fruit stood on the table before Hyde. He started up to shake hands, appearing very much elated. Duffham, more experienced than I, saw that he had been taking quite enough wine.

"So you have had your stepfather here!" was one of the doctor's first remarks. "Been making up the quarrel, I suppose."

"He came of his own accord; I didn't invite him," said Hyde, laughing. "My mother wrote me word that they were coming—to give me their good wishes for the future."

"Just what Johnny Ludlow here says he wants to give," said Duffham: though I didn't see that he need have brought my words up, and make a fellow feel shy.

"Then, by Jove, you shall drink them in champagne!" exclaimed Hyde. He caught up a bottle of champagne that stood under the sideboard, from which the wire had been removed, and would have cut the string but for the restraining hand of Duffham.

"No, Hyde; you have had rather too much as it is."

"I swear to you that I have not had a spoonful. It has not been opened, you see. My mother refused it, and Massock does not care for champagne: he likes something heavier."

"If you have not taken champagne you have taken other wine."

"Sherry at dinner, and port since," laughed Hyde.

"And more of it than is good for you."

"When Massock sits down to port wine he drinks like a fish," re turned Hyde, still laughing. "Of course I had to make a show o drinking with him. I wished the port at Hanover."

By a dexterous movement, he caught up a knife and cut the string Out shot the cork with a bang, and he filled three of the tumblers tha stood on the sideboard with wine and froth—one for each of us "Your health, doctor," nodded he, and tossed off his own.

"It will not do your throat good," said Duffham, angrily. "Let me look at the throat."

"Not until you and Johnny have wished me luck."

We did it, and drank the wine. Duffham examined the throat; and told Hyde, for his consolation, that it was not in a state to be trifled with

"Oh, it's nothing," said Hyde carelessly. "But I don't want it to be bad to-morrow when I travel, and I thought perhaps you might be able to give me something or other to set it to rights to-night. I start at ten to-morrow morning."

"Sore throats are not cured so easily," retorted Duffham. "You must have taken cold."

Telling him he would send in a gargle and a cooling draught, and that he was to go to bed soon, Duffham rose to leave. Hyde opened the glass doors of the room that we might pass out that way, and stepped over the threshold with us. Talking with Duffham, he strolled onwards towards the gate.

"About three weeks, I suppose," he said, in answer to the query of how long he meant to be away. "If Mabel——"

Gliding out of the bushy laurels on one side the path, and planting herself right in front of us, came Ketira the gipsy. Her face looked yellower than ever in the twilight of the summer's evening; her piercing black eyes fiercer. Hyde was taken aback by the unexpected encounter He started a step back.

"Where's my daughter, Hyde Stockhausen?"

"Go away," he said, in the contemptuous tone one might use to a dog. "I don't know anything of your daughter."

"Only tell me where she is, that I may find her. I ask no more."

"I tell you that I do not know anything of her. You must be mad to think it. Get along with you!"

"Hyde Stockhausen, you lie. *You do know where she is; you know that it is with you she has been.* Heaven hears me say it: deny it if you dare."

His face looked whiter than death. Just for an instant he seemed unable to speak. Ketira changed her tone to one of plaintive wailing.

"She was my one little ewe lamb. What had she or I done to you that you should come as a spoiler to the fold? I *prayed* you not

Make her your wife, and I will yet bless you. It is not too late. Do not break her heart and mine."

Hyde had had time to rally his courage. A man full of wine can generally call some up, even in the most embarrassing of situations. He scornfully asked the gipsy whether she had come out of Bedlam. Ketira saw how hard he was—that there was no hope.

"It is said that you depart to-morrow to bring home a bride, Hyde Stockhausen. *I counsel you not to do it.* For your own sake, and for the young woman's sake, I bid you beware. The marriage will not bring good to you or to her."

That put Hyde in a towering passion. His words came out with a splutter as he spurned her from him.

"Cease your folly, you senseless old beldame! Do you dare to threaten me? Take yourself out of my sight instantly, before I fetch my horsewhip. And, if ever you attempt to molest me again, I will have you sent to the treadmill."

Ketira stood looking at him while he spoke, never moving an inch. As his voice died away she lifted her forefinger in warning. And anything more impressive than her voice, than her whole manner—anything more startlingly defiant than her countenance, I never wish to see.

"It is well; I go. But listen to me, Hyde Stockhausen; mark what I say. Only three times shall you see me again in life. But each one of those times you shall have cause to remember; and after the last of them you will not need to see me more."

It was a strange threat. That she made it, Duffham could, to this day, corroborate. Pulling her red cloak about her shoulders, she went swiftly through the gate, and disappeared within the opposite coppice.

Hyde smiled; his good humour was returning to him. One can be brave enough when an enemy turns tail.

"Idiotic old Egyptian!" he exclaimed lightly. "What on earth ever made her take the fancy into her head, that I knew what became of Kettie, I can't imagine. I wonder, Duffham, some of you people in authority here don't get her confined as a lunatic!"

"We must first of all find that she is a lunatic," was Duffham's dry rejoinder.

"Why, what else is she?"

"Not that."

"She is; and a dangerous one," retorted Hyde.

"Nonsense, man! Gipsies have queer ways and notions; and—and—are not to be judged altogether as other people," added the doctor, finishing off (as it struck me) with different words from those he had been about to say. "Good night: and don't take any more of that champagne."

Hyde returned indoors, and we walked away, not seeing a sign of the red cloak anywhere.

"I must say I should not like to be attacked in this manner, were I Hyde," I remarked to Duffham. "How obstinate the old gipsy is!"

"Ah," replied Duffham. "I'd sooner believe her than him."

The words surprised me, and I turned to him quickly. "Why do you say that, sir?"

"Because I do say it, Johnny," was the unsatisfactory answer. "And now good evening to you, lad, for I must send the physic in."

"Just a word, please Mr. Duffham. Do you know where that poor Kettie is?—and did you know that Hyde Stockhausen stole her?"

"No, to both your questions, Johnny Ludlow."

Everybody liked Hyde's wife. A fragile girl with a weak voice, who looked as if a strong wind would blow her away. Duffham feared she was not strong enough to make old days.

Virginia Cottage flourished. Parson Hyde had died and left all his fortune to Hyde: who had now nothing to do but take care of his wife and his money, and enjoy life. Before the next summer came round, Hyde had a son and heir. A fine little shaver, with blue eyes like Hyde's, and good lungs. His mother was a long while getting about again: and then she looked like a shadow, and had a short, hacking kind of cough. Hyde wore a grave face at times, and would say he wished Mabel could get strong.

But Hyde was regarded with less favour than formerly. People did not scruple to call him "villain." And one Sunday, when Mr. Holland told us in his sermon that man's heart was deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, the congregation wondered whether he meant it especially for Stockhausen. For the truth had come out.

When Hyde departed to keep his marriage engagement, Ketira the gipsy had again disappeared from Church Dykely. In less than a month afterwards, Abel Carew received a letter from her. She had found Kettie: and she had found that her own instincts against Hyde Stockhausen were not mistaken ones. For all his seeming-fair face and his indignant denials, it was he who had been the thief.

"Of all brazen-faced knaves, that Stockhausen must be the worst!—an adept in cunning, a lying hypocrite!" exploded the Squire.

"I suspected him at the time," said Duffham.

"You did! What were your grounds for it?"

"I had no particular grounds. His manner did not appear to me to be satisfactory; that was all. Of course I was not sure."

"He is a base man," concluded the Squire. And from that time he turned the cold shoulder on Hyde.

But time is a sure healer of wounds; a softener of resentment. As it passed on, we began to forget Hyde's dark points, and to remember his good qualities. Any way, Ketira the gipsy and Ketira's daughter passed out of memory, just as they had passed out of sight.

Suddenly we heard that Abel Carew was preparing to go on a journey. I went off to ask him where he was bound for.

"I am going to see *them*, Master Johnny," he replied. "I don't know how they are off, sir, and it is my duty to see. The child is ill: and I fear they may be wanting assistance, which Ketira is too proud to write and ask for."

"Kettie ill! What is the matter with her?"

Abel shook his head. "I shall know more when I get there, sir."

Abel Carew locked up his cottage and began his pilgrimage into Hertfordshire with a staff and a wallet, intending to walk all the way. In a fortnight he was back again, bringing with him a long face.

"It is sad to see the child," he said to me, as I sat in his room listening to the news. "She is no more like the bonnie Kettie that we knew here, than a dead girl's like a living one. Worn out, bent and silent, she sits, day after day and week after week, and her mother cannot rouse her. She has sat so all along."

"But what is the matter with her?"

"She is slowly dying, sir."

"What of?"

"A broken heart."

"Oh dear!" said I; believing I knew who had broken it.

"Yes," said Abel, "*he*. He won her heart's best love, Master Johnny, and she pines for him yet. Ketira says it was his marriage that struck her the death blow. A few weeks she may still linger, but they won't be many."

Very sorry did I feel to hear it: for Ketira's sake as well as Kettie's. The remembrance of the day I had gilded the oak-ball, and her wonderful gratitude for it, came flashing back to me.

And there's nothing more to add to this digression. Except that Kettie died.

The tidings did not appear to affect Hyde Stockhausen. All his thoughts were given to his wife and child. Old Abel had never reproached him by as much as a word: if by chance they met, Abel avoided looking at him, or turned off another way.

When the baby was six months old and began to cut his teeth, he did not appear inclined to do it kindly. He grew thin and cross; and the parents, who seemed to think no baby ever born could come up to this one, began to be anxious. Hyde worshipped the child ridiculously.

"The boy will do well enough if he does not get convulsions," Duffham said in semi-confidence to some people over his surgery counter. "If *they* come on—why, I can't answer for what the result might be. Fat? Yes, he is a great deal too fat: they feed him up so."

The surgeon was sitting by his parlour fire one snowy evening shortly after this, when Stockhausen burst upon him in a fine state of agitation; arms working, breath gone. The baby was in a fit.

"Come, come; don't you give way," cried the doctor, believing Hyde was going into a fit on his own account. "We'll see."

Out of one convulsion into another went the child that night: but in a few days it was better; thought to be getting well. Mr. and Mrs Stockhausen in consequence felt themselves in the seventh heaven.

"The danger is quite past," observed Hyde, walking down the snowy path with Duffham, one morning when the doctor had been paying a visit; and Hyde rubbed his hands in gleeful relief, for he been like a crazed lunatic while the child lay ill. "Duffham, if that child had died, I think *I* should have died."

"Not a bit of it," said Duffham. "You are made of tougher stuff."

He was about to open the garden gate as he spoke. But, suddenly appearing there to confront them stood Ketira the gipsy. A moment's startled pause ensued. Duffham spoke kindly to her. Hyde recoiled a step or two; as if the sight had frightened him.

"You may well start back," she said to the latter, taking no notice of Duffham's civility. "I told you, you should not see me many times in life, Hyde Stockhausen, but that when you did, I should be the harbinger of evil. Go home, and meet it."

Turning off under the garden hedge, without another word, she disappeared from their view as suddenly as she had come into it. Hyde Stockhausen made a feint of laughing.

"The woman is more mad than ever," he said. "Decidedly, Duffham, she ought to be in confinement."

Never an assenting syllable gave Duffham. He was looking as stern as a judge. "What's that?" he suddenly exclaimed, turning sharply to the house.

A maid servant was flying down the path. Deborah Preen stood at the door, crying and calling as if in some dire calamity. Hyde rushed towards her, asking what was amiss. Duffham followed more slowly. The baby had got another attack of convulsions.

And this time it was for death.

When these events were happening, Great Malvern was not the overgrown, fashionable place it is now; but a quiet little spot with only a few houses in it, chiefly clustering under the highest of the hills. Amid these houses, one bright May day, Hyde Stockhausen went, seeking lodgings.

Hyde had not died of the loss of the baby. For here he was, alive and well, nearly eighteen months afterwards. That it had been a sharp trial for him nobody doubted; and for his wife also. And when a second baby came to replace the first, it brought them no good, for it did not live a week.

That was in March: two months ago: and ever since Mrs. Stockhausen had been hovering between this world and the next. A fever

and other ailments had taken what little strength she had out of her. *This*, to Hyde Stockhausen, was a worse affliction than even the loss of the children, for she was to him as the very apple of his eye. When somewhat improving, the doctors recommended Malvern. So Hyde had brought her to it with a nurse and old Deborah; and had left them at the Crown Hotel while he looked for lodgings.

He found them in one of the houses down by the abbey. Some nice rooms, quite suitable. And to them his wife was taken. For a very few days afterwards she seemed to be getting better: and then all the bad symptoms returned. A doctor was called in. He feared she might not rally again; that the extreme debility might prevent it: and he said as much to Hyde in private.

Anything more unreasonable than the spirit in which Hyde met this, the Malvern doctor had never seen.

"You are a fool," said Hyde. "Begging your pardon, sir, I should think you don't know your profession. My wife is fifty pounds better than she was at Church Dykely. How can you take upon yourself to say she will not rally?"

"I said she might not," replied the surgeon, who happened to possess a temper mild as milk. "I hope she will with all my heart. I shall do my best to bring it about."

It was an anxious time. Mrs. Stockhausen fluctuated greatly: to-day able to sit up in an easy chair; to-morrow too exhausted to be lifted out of bed. But, one morning she did seem to be ever so much better. Her cheeks were pink, her lips had a smile.

"Ah," said the doctor cheerfully when he went in, "we shall do now, I hope. You are up early to-day."

"I felt so much better that I wanted to get up and surprise you," she answered in quite a strong voice—for her. "And it was so warm, and the world looked so beautiful. I should like to be able to mount one of those donkeys and go up the hill. Hyde says that the view, even from St. Ann's well, is charming."

"So it is," assented the surgeon. "Have you never seen it?"

"No, I have not been to Malvern before."

This was the first day of June. Hyde would not forget the date to the last hour of his life. It was hot summer weather: the sun came in at the open window, touching her hair and her pale forehead as she lay back in the easy chair after the doctor left; a canary at a neighbouring house was singing sweetly; the majestic hills, with their light and shade, looked closer even than they were in reality. Hyde began to lower the blind.

"Don't, please, Hyde."

"But, my darling, the sun will soon be in your eyes."

"I shall like it. Is it not a lovely day! I think it is that which has put new life into me."

"And we shall soon have you up the hill, where we can sit and look all over everywhere. On one or two occasions, when the atmosphere was rarefied to an unusual degree, I have caught the silver line of the Bristol Channel."

"How pleasant it will be, Hyde! To sit there with you, and to know that I am getting well!"

Early in the afternoon, when Mabel lay down to rest, Hyde went strolling up the hill, for the first time since his present stay at Malvern. He got as far as St. Ann's; drank a tumbler of the water, and then paced about, hither and thither, to the right and left, not intending to ascend higher that day. If he went to the summit, Mabel might be awake before he got home again; and he would not have lost five minutes of her waking moments for a mine of gold. Looking at his watch, he sat down on a bench that was backed by some dark trees.

"Yes," he mused, "it will be delightful to sit about here with Mabel, and show her the different points of interest in the landscape. Worcester Cathedral, and St. Andrew's Spire; and the Bristol——"

Some stir behind caused him to turn his head. The words froze on his tongue. There stood Ketira the gipsy. She had been sitting or lying amidst the trees, wrapped in her red cloak. Hyde's look of startled dread was manifest. She saw it; and accosted him.

"We meet again, Hyde Stockhausen. Ah, you have cause to fear!—your face may well whiten to the shivering hue of snow at sight of me! You are alone in the world now—as you left my daughter to be. Once more we shall see one another. Till then farewell."

Recovering his equanimity when left alone, Hyde betook himself down the zig-zag path towards the village, calling the gipsy all the wicked names in the dictionary, and feeling tempted to give her into custody.

At his home, he was met by a commotion. The nurse wore a scared face; Deborah Preen, wringing her hands, burst out sobbing.

Mabel was dead. Had died in a fainting fit.

Leaving his wife in her grave at Malvern, Hyde Stockhausen returned to Church Dykely. We hardly knew him.

A more changed man than Hyde was from that time the world has never seen. He walked about like a melancholy maniac, hands in his coat pockets, eyes on the ground, steps dragging; looking just like one who has some great remorse lying upon his conscience and is being consumed by the past. The most wonderful thing in the eyes of Church Dykely was, that he grew religious: came to church twice on Sunday, stayed for the Sacrament, was good to the poor, gentle and kindly to all. Mr. Holland observed to the Squire that Stockhausen had become a true Christian. He made his will, and altogether seemed to be tired of life.

"Go you, Johnny, and ask him to come over to us sometimes in an evening; tell him it will be a break to his loneliness," said the Squire to me one day. "Now that the poor fellow is ill and repentant, we must let bygones be bygones. I hear that Abel Carew spent half an hour sociably with him yesterday."

I went off as directed. Summer had come round again, for more than a year had now passed since Mabel's death, and the Virginia creeper on the cottage walls was all alight with red flowers. Hyde was pacing his garden in front of it, his head bent.

"Is it you, Johnny," he said, in the patient, gentle tone he now always used, as he held his hand out. He was more like a shadow than a man; his face drawn and long, his blue eyes large and dark and sad.

"We should be so glad if you would come," I added, after giving the message. "Mrs. Todhetly says you make yourself too much of a stranger. Will you come this evening?"

He shook his head slightly, clasping my hand the while, his own feeling like a burning coal, and smiling the sweetest and saddest smile.

"You are all too good for me; too considerate; better far than I deserve. No, I cannot come to you this evening, Johnny: I have not the spirits for it; hardly the strength. But I will come one evening if I can. Thank them all, Johnny, for me."

And he did come. But he could not speak much above a whisper, so weak and hollow had his voice grown. And of all the humble-minded, kindly-spirited individuals that ever sat at our tea-table, the chiefest was Hyde Stockhausen.

"I fear he is going the way of all the Stockhausens," said Mrs. Todhetly afterwards. "But what a beautiful frame of mind he is in!"

"Beautiful, you call it!" cried the Pater. "The man seems to me to be eating his heart out in some impossible atonement. Had I set fire to the church and burnt up all the congregation, I don't think it could have subdued me to that extent."

Of all places, where should I next meet Hyde but at Worcester races! We knew that he had been worse lately, that his mother had come to Virginia Cottage to be with him at the last, and that there was no further hope. Therefore, to see Hyde this afternoon, perched on a tall horse on Pitchcroft, looked more like magic than reality.

"*You* at the races, Hyde!"

"Yes; but not for pleasure," he answered, smiling faintly; and looking so shadowy and weak that it was a marvel how he could stick on the horse. "I am in search of one who is growing too fond of these scenes. I want to find him—and to say a few last words to him."

"If you mean Jim Massock"—for I thought it could be nobody but young Jim—"I saw him yonder, down by the shows. He was drinking porter outside a booth. How are you, Hyde?"

"Oh, getting on slowly," he said, with a peculiar smile.

"Getting on! It looks to me to be the other way."

Turning his horse quickly round, after nodding to me, in the direction of the shows and drinking booths, he nearly turned it upon a tall, gaunt skeleton in a red cloak—Ketira the gipsy, She must have sprung out of the crowd.

But oh, how ill she looked! Hyde was strangely altered; but not as she was. The yellow face was shrivelled and shrunken, the fire had left her eyes. Hyde checked his horse; but the animal turned restive. He controlled it with his hand, and sat still before Ketira.

"Yes, look at me," she burst forth. "*For the last time.* The end is close at hand both for you and for me. We shall meet Kettie where we are going."

He leaned from his horse to speak to her: his voice a low sad wail, his words apparently those of deprecating prayer. Ketira heard him quietly to the end, gazing into his face, and then slowly turned away.

"Fare you well, Hyde Stockhausen. Farewell for ever."

Before leaving the course Hyde had an accident. While talking to Jim Massock, some drums and trumpets struck up their noise at a neighbouring show; the horse started violently, and Hyde was thrown. He thought he was not much hurt and mounted again.

"What else could you expect?" demanded Duffham, when Hyde got back to Virginia Cottage. "You have not strength to sit a donkey, and you must go careering off to Worcester races on a fiery horse!"

But the fall had done Hyde some inward damage, and it hastened the end. He died that day week.

"Some men's sins go before them to Judgment, and some follow after," solemnly said Mr. Holland the next Sunday from the pulpit. "He who is gone from among us had taken his to his Saviour—and he is now at rest."

"All chance and coincidence," pronounced Duffham, talking over the strange threat of Ketira the gipsy and its stranger working out. "Yes; chance, I say, each of the three times. The woman, happening to be at hand, must have known by common report that the child was in peril; she may have learnt at Malvern that the wife was dying; and any goose with eyes in its head might have read coming death on *his* face that afternoon on Pitchcroft. That's all about it, Johnny."

Very probably. The reader can exercise his own judgment. I only know it all happened.

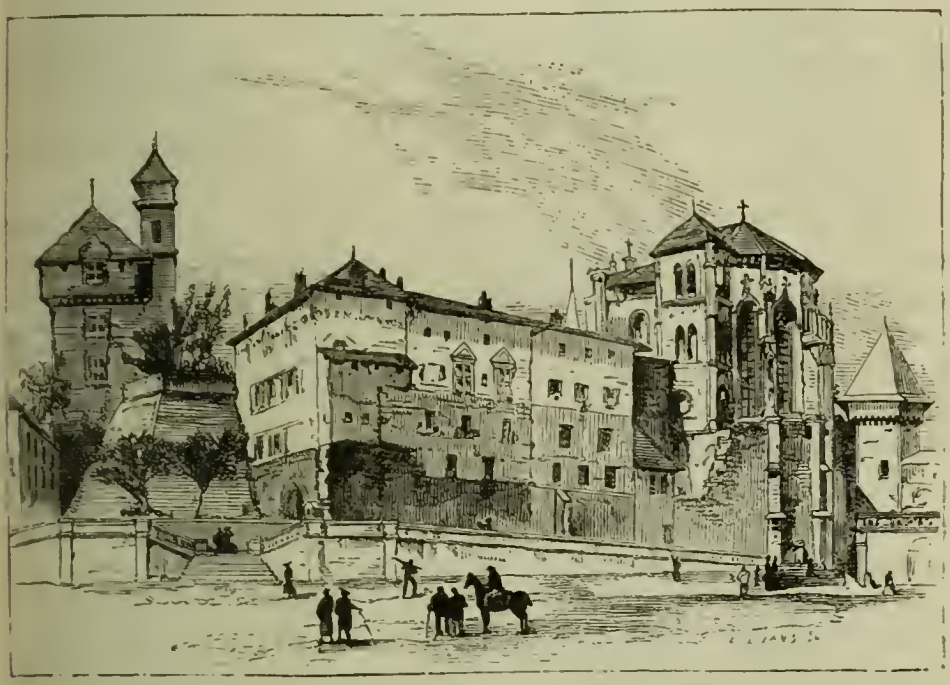
JOHNNY LUDLOW.

THE LAKES OF SAVOIE.

By the Author of "A Night in a Monastery."

LAST month we found ourselves amidst the charms of Rousseau's old home, les Charmettes, the blue waters of the Lac du Bourget, and the solitude of the tombs of the kings of Sardinia—the Abbey of the Haute-Combe.

In this concluding paper upon the attractions of this part of the



Chateau and Chapel Royal, Chambery.

world, let us endeavour to bring before the reader a glimpse of the wonders of the ancient town of Annecy and its lake: the latter being celebrated for its picturesque beauty as much as the Lac du Bourget is distinguished by its wild grandeur.

We had spent the night at Chambéry.

The garçon had marshalled us up the dim, ancient staircase to our respective dormitories, in a sort of torch-light procession. The night had turned chilly, and the wind blew down long corridors, and through cracks and crannies; as if it meant to assure us that, whatever of summer the days possessed, summer nights were as yet blessings of the future.

Left to solitude and my own reflections, I glanced around upon the large, long room, and found no food for thought, no source of companionship, from its dull, desolate walls. I threw open the window and

looked out upon the night. The town seemed quiet enough. The Place was deserted. Immediately in front, the cathedral reared its dark, uninteresting façade. The moon threw her beams upon the ill-paved square: a light so cold and brilliant that by its aid you might count the stones of the thoroughfare. It played at lights and shadows with the sacred edifice, just as it had played for generations long passed away: the moon as young and fresh as ever; the world only growing old and gray.

Now would have been the time for a row on the Lac du Bourget; the time to enjoy the dark, solemn water, and the black depths of the mountains and the sky overhead. No sound but the plash of our own oars to disturb us: even the cry of the wild bird hushed in sleep. I suggested the fancy to H. and M.; who, inspired by the same brilliant idea of looking out upon the world, at that moment opened their window, which happened to be next to mine.

M. shuddered. "It was anything but warm at mid-day," said she. "What, think you, would it be at midnight?"

"But the reward!" I cried, affecting sentiment. "That immense sweep of water reposing under the moonlight; the grandeur of the mountains beneath the same influence; the weird solitude of the abbey, containing, in 'solemn pomp,' the royal dust of centuries. We should float down the pathway of moonshine, enshrined in jewels."

"Better worship at another shrine," said H., who very properly scorns all approach to the weakness of sentimentality; "the shrine of Somnus. We have to be up early in the morning, and you have a hard day's work before you. There goes the hour when evil spirits appear. Let the good ones retire. Bon soir."

Upon which they withdrew, and the window was closed.

The solemn bell vibrated on the air, the last stroke lingering long. The stars kept vigil, attending the Queen of Night. Instinctively there recurred to the memory the reign of another Queen of Night—Ilma di Murska—who as Astrifiammante, in the few minutes that she appears upon the stage in that character, electrifies her audience with passages that no one else dare attempt. But she was not here to-night to startle the air with her magic. All was still and silent enough. So still and silent, that the very quietness turned the current of thought into another and very different channel, as memory conjured up the words of that Christmas hymn so many have often listened to at the Temple church—whose services have no rival in the metropolis: that hymn set to those exquisite strains of Mendelssohn by a prince amongst organists, Mr. Hopkins.

It came upon the midnight clear,
That glorious song of old;
From angels bending near the earth,
To touch their harps of gold.

"Peace to the earth, goodwill to men,
From Heaven's all gracious King!"
The world in solemn stillness lay
To hear the angels sing.

But it was time to follow H.'s advice, and let waking dreams give place to the more restful dreams of sleep.

CASCADE DU GREZY.

Before five o'clock, the great bells of the cathedral clashed out upon the air. The tolling of the small hours had passed unnoticed; but this clash and clamour, this babel and rage of bells, would have awakened the seven sleepers to animation. Had five hours indeed elapsed since there had passed before the mind in a midnight reverie Ilma di Murska, and the Temple, and Bishop Heber? It seemed but five minutes.

But there was no mistaking this révéil-matin. And H. took car there should be no slumbering again, after the manner of the sluggard Like a faithful but much dreaded watchman—some of whom still patr the out-of-the-way villages of Switzerland and Germany; chanting thei doleful hymns, and doing no other good than wake up to the wearines of existence unhappy mortals in their blissful first or second sleep- ere the bells had ceased their fury, he looked in upon me and thre open the window. To jump up and close it upon the awful dim wa a matter of necessity, involving reason or hearing.

"Qualifying for an inquisitor?" was the natural question.

"Kindly cruel," he coolly replied, ringing for boots and hot wate "You have breakfast to eat; train to catch; an immense amount c work before you. Bah! and you call it pleasure! How glad I am t be returning home! A good lounge, with a book and a paper, in th avenue, is worth all your hunger and thirst for hills and valleys an Roman remains."

"You are infatuated!" I cried: "or a monomaniac; or ——"

"Well remarked, but wrongly applied," he returned, laughing. "Bu here comes your hot water. Make use of it at once, or you will soo find yourself in hot water of a very different description."

Coffee and rolls were ready for us at the appointed moment—wha a blessing is that of punctuality!—and the garçon, who had been s coolly impudent to the hostess overnight, was now bustling about, al smiles and civility. The remainder of the hotel world, in spite of th roar of bells, still appeared to be sleeping. A true illustration of th proverb that habit is second nature.

So also, sleeping, seemed the outside world; for when before seve o'clock we issued forth, the streets were deserted, the shops closed Here and there the shutters of a café were being taken down by sleepy garçon with heavy eyelids and locks dishevelled, and a coun tenance the reverse of cheerful; who probably felt no more affectio than we ourselves for the summons from the cathedral to be up an doing—and with greater reason. He, poor fellow, awoke to anothe day of toil and labour; we to one of pleasure.

H.'s train started before ours. He relented not for a moment in hi determination to return home; and we saw him safely off. In a spiri of banter he called after us "bon voyage," coupled with a hope tha we might return at night safe and sound. The train fairly away, sudden thought occurred, and dismay fell upon us for a moment. H. when joining in our excursions, was paymaster. He had been so i this instance. Were we destitute of funds; and if so, what was t be done?

Hastily and with trepidation we consulted our pockets and purses Well, with economy we might manage to make both ends meet. Bu one thing was evident; we must travel second class: no very grea

ffliction, especially in France. M. landed over to me the contents f her portemonnaie, and I felt that I had a serious responsibility to ncounter.

There was still some little time to spare ere the train started, and we auntered into the park and watched a whole company of soldiers narch past with loads of straw upon their backs: and noted the radually increasing hum and bustle of the town. It was a splendid norning, promise of a hot and glowing day: and we re-entered the tation in anticipation of a rare enjoyment. The train came up, and re soon found ourselves steaming away on the high road to Geneva; hich branches off for Annecy at Aix-les-Bains.

At Aix we changed trains and had half an hour to wait: an interval vell spent in examining the interesting watering place. The season had iot yet commenced, and there was an air of repose about it especially efreshing. Here reigned a very different aspect and experience from hat of the deserted town of Allevard. The latter looked ruinous and neglected. Old, and badly built, its straggling, narrow streets offered iot one point of attraction. At Aix-les-Bains all was a contrast to his, though the town was equally empty. The houses were modern, vell and picturesquely built, many standing in their own gardens. The oad leading from the station to the town was broad and sunny. Large fashionable-looking hotels reared their heads, enticing visitors o enter their hospitable portals and there take up their abode. The gardens were well planned; the establishment was imposing.

We soon came to the more ancient part of the town, which was parricularly clean-looking and well constructed. There was an absence of tiffness about the whole place, an air of openness and freedom, parricularly agreeable as a first impression. A few months in the season night be spent here most pleasantly: of that there could not be a loubt. A short walk—not so very short either—brought you to the borders of the Lac du Bourget and its exquisite blue waters, whence vou obtained a magnificent panorama of the opposite and more barren shore; its rugged mountains seemingly inaccessible; the white, beautiful building of the Abbey of the Haute-Combe reposing to the right in calm dignity, and looking from hence, as from all other points, a noble eceptable for its Royal dead.

The site of Aix-les-Bains between the mountains, which rise and ndulate on all sides, cannot easily be surpassed. How favoured they vhose tents are pitched amidst such scenes! How favoured they vhose privilege it is to leave their distant homes and make acquaintance vith them, though it be but for a season! Heart and mind must for ever after be the better for it. Memory henceforth possesses a rich storehouse of recollections that will serve it in time of need, and n its reveries cast upon the spirit, perhaps worn out with the cares nd prosaic realities of every-day life, a glow such as is sometimes

experienced from the conjuring up of some sweet dream long pa but not forgotten.

Aix-les-Bains, of course, abounds in excursions. Not the lea pleasant of these is that which leads you to the Cascade du Gréz one of the most romantic spots in the neighbourhood. But associate with this is a very sad story, which you are pretty sure to hear fro the guides and boatmen you may chance to meet.

In 1813, Hortense de Beauharnais, the ex-queen of Holland, passe a portion of the season at Aix-les-Bains. Amidst her train, her greate friend and favourite was the Baronne de Broc, a young, beautifu and most amiable woman. On the morning of the 10th of Jun the queen announced her intention of visiting Annecy, for the purpo

QUAY AND OLD CASTLE, ANNECY.

of spending some hours upon its lake. The baronne besought he rather to make an excursion to the Cascade du Grézy, with whos charms she was most impatient to become acquainted. The quee would not consent, and they started for Annecy.

Upon reaching that portion of the road whence a pathway turns of for the cascade, the royal favourite again renewed her entreatie The queen, ever gentle and kind, yielded. They would have time t give a glance to the cascade, and then proceed on their way t Annecy.

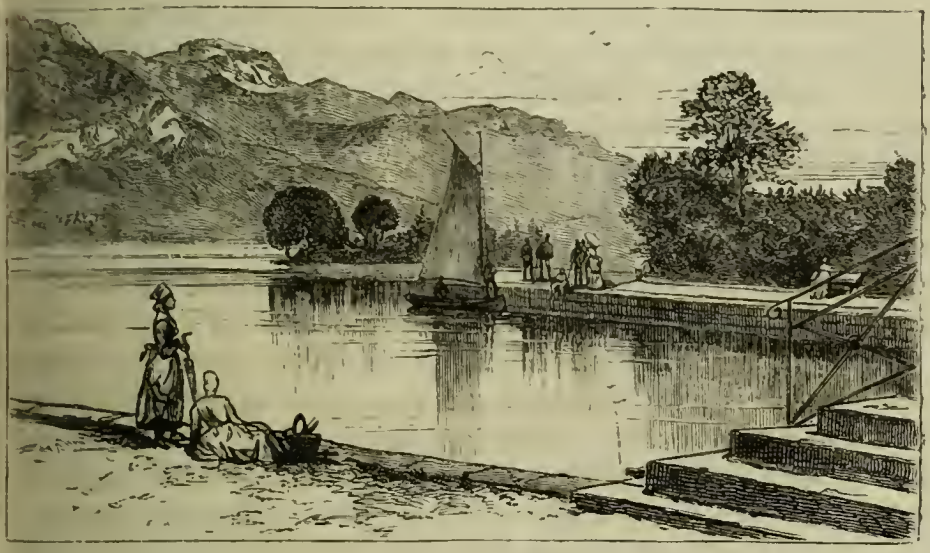
They reached the cascade, and were transfixed with delight at th scene before them. The falling water; the old romantic-looking mil with its rickety wheel; the wild rocks; the steep, broken precipice The Baronne de Broc, delighted at having obtained her wish, an being thus rewarded, clapped her hands in ecstacy; and refusing th offer of the miller to pilot her about, separated herself from the others in order to discover from what point the view was most charming.

Having attained her object, the baronne suddenly stopped on the brink, and raising her hands exclaimed in rapturous tones: "Dieu! que c'est beau!" At the same moment her foot slipped, and she was precipitated into the chasm. When her body was recovered, life was extinct. The queen was inconsolable, and for very long her health did not recover from the shock it had received. She caused a monument to be erected on the spot, bearing these words:—

"Madame la Baronne de Broc, âgée de 25 ans, a péri sous les yeux de son amie, le 10 Juin, 1813.

"O vous qui visitez ces lieux, n'avancez qu'avec précaution sur ces abîmes: *songez à ceux qui vous aiment.*"

But to return.



LAKE OF ANNECY.

Our halt hour at Aix-les-Bains passed all too quickly; but, remembering our perilous, because almost bankrupt, position, we felt that stern necessity compelled us to hurry on our way. The scene changed, and ere long the train was conveying us towards Annecy.

It was after we had left Aix-les-Bains, and shortly before reaching Annecy, that the greatest beauty, charm, and wonder of the excursion commenced. As soon as the train left St. André—the station next before Annecy—it turned into the midst of one of the finest and grandest mountain torrents it is possible to conceive. Great and high chasms on either side seemed to close in the rushing water, which swept between with tremendous rapidity and force: now dashing in its headlong course down a steep decline, now frothing over rocks and stones, to all which it seemed to bid utter defiance.

Every step of the way opened up a fresh scene. Now the gorge contracted, and the water rushed through it as if by its mighty power it would thrust the rocks asunder. Now it suddenly expanded, and the water dashed foaming onwards, as if rejoicing in its freedom.

Now, as the railroad wound about, it was to be seen on the right ha now on the left; so that, in order not to lose it, we had frequently move our seats from one side of the carriage to the other; the torr rushing, hissing, boiling, like a huge, restless, angry thing of life. T depth here and there was tremendous, and to look down from t height of the chasm over its edge into the setting depths below m have been appalling.

This torrent is called the Fier, and well deserves its name; the pa is called les Gorges du Fier. The whole scene is of almost terri grandeur and power. A gallery has been constructed with great sk for a considerable distance over the torrent and attached to the rocl from which a sense of this grandeur and power may be obtained, b at a premium paid to weak nerves. The waters are of the m exquisite emerald green; a perfect aquamarine, clear and transparer and the angler, upon reaching the level, would find them well stock with big, lively, frolicsome trout. Whether looking above or below, t effect is constantly that of enchantment: one of the most delighti scenes to be found in France. At length the gorge disappeared, a we came upon a wide extent of water rushing down to swell the torre and looking in its shallow stony bed like a miniature sea in a stor Immediately after, the train stopped at Annecy.

Annecy is a town of considerable antiquity. The first historic mention of it is in a charter of the Emperor Lothair in 867, but it known to have existed at a date long prior to this. A French Socie of Literature was founded here by St. Francis de Sales twenty yea before Richelieu founded that of Paris; and it was at Annecy that t Saint wrote his "Introduction to the Devout Life."

The ancient part of the town is irregularly built; the houses, shapes and sizes, seeming to have been thrown together as chan dictated; possessing no other beauty or attraction than that bestow upon them by time: an attraction of course in itself considerabl Great arcades stretch half across the streets, dark and gloomy ar heavy, reaching up to the first stories, and looking almost like entranc to long black tunnels. The smells would rival those of Cologn perhaps exceed them; and in threading these old thoroughfares it difficult to breathe freely. The modern portion of the town is mo attractive. Annecy, in many ways, is a place of considerable impo ance and industry. As many as 6,000 people will assemble there its Tuesday markets. It also possesses many factories.

But the great charm of Annecy is its lake: one of the most love lakes to be found in this part of the world. We went straight to t Hôtel Verdun, to which we had been recommended, and found everything that could be desired both as to its site and internal arrang ments. From its windows on the one side might be seen the qua with its old bridge, and the steamer lying idly beside it; and beyon

it, on a height, the ancient castle or château of Annecy, looking with its four towers like a miniature Tower of London. From another window we caught a splendid view of the lake and the distant mountains; the waters, in the intensely hot sunshine, looking so calm and blue and cool, that we longed to find ourselves upon its surface.

But time pressed, and our first question of the polite landlady was as to the best means of seeing the beauties of the lake in the short space of two hours. If, madame observed logically, we took a boat, we should be able to view but a small portion of these beauties; whereas a carriage and a good pair of horses would enable us to see the lake to its utmost extent. This clear reasoning reduced the matter to one of necessity and not of choice. We breakfasted at a table whence the lake was visible, alternately feasting upon its beauties, and the dainties of the chef's larder: and in half an hour's time madame's orders had prepared the vehicle, and we found ourselves bowling swiftly by the water's edge.

In every way this lake is a contrast to the Lac du Bourget. There everything was gloomy, desolate and wild; or at least barren. Here the hills and mountains rose up on all sides, far and near, great and small, of the most varied shapes and graceful undulations, clothed with the richest and most luxuriant verdure. Nothing could exceed the beauty of the drive for the next two hours. Here a snow-white cottage reposed amidst its green nest; there a whole village lay in the mountain, the houses rising one above another from the very shores of the lake. At every advancing step the mountains opened up in new forms and changed aspect: now appearing in unbroken undulations, wave after wave of green hill, now separating into different chains, and running up into vales and passes. At the very extremity the mountains rose in massive and curious form; the snow, reposing upon their summits, looking cool and dazzling in the noonday glare.

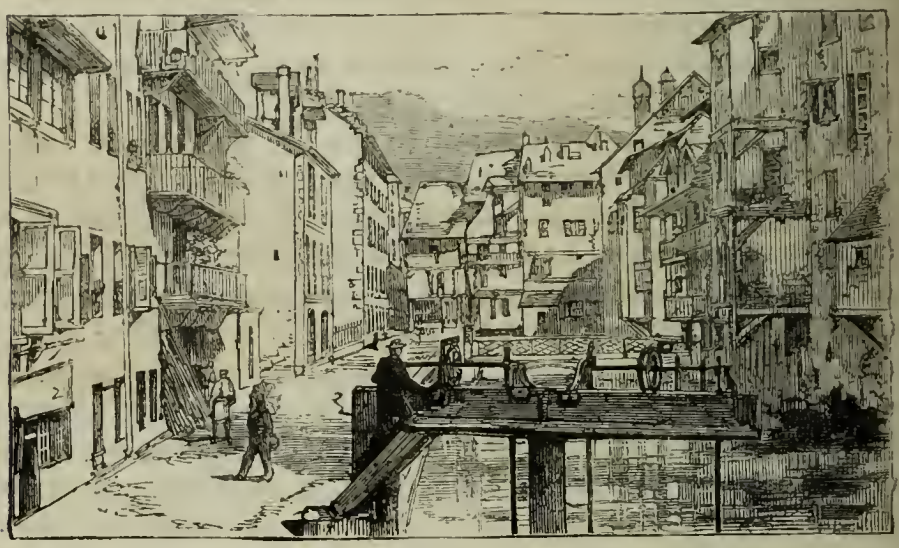
The waters of the lake added their matchless charm to the scene. On the opposite side, the mountains and small villages were reflected upon its calm surface. The bright blue of the sky was thrown in deeper shade upon it. Here and there a swan made its graceful progress, and in places a miniature island threw its cool reflection around. Nothing more beautiful and brilliant could be imagined. The Lac du Bourget had impressed us by its solitude, its desolate aspect: with the Lac d'Annecy we were enchanted.

The drive and the short stay to which we were limited but caused an intense longing for a more familiar acquaintance. During the season a small steamboat plies the lake, which must be an acquisition to the place; for delightful as the drive is, the whole panorama as seen from the waters must be yet more remarkable. Rousseau stayed here several times; and some distance down the lake stands a small house called la Tour, long inhabited by Eugène Sue. There are many spots

of interest to visit on the borders of the lake, and numerous Roma remains. Of the latter the whole neighbourhood bears many traces.

On our way back to the station we drove through some of th ancient parts of the town, and noted many curious features, of whic a hasty glimpse could give us but a rapid, though strong and lastin impression. An impression which caused us to register a resolv that, all being well, we would some day return for a longer sojourn.

Our day had been intensely charming and delightful; the scener we had passed through beautiful beyond expression. The experience of yesterday almost sank into poverty beside those of to-day; and w proceeded on our long railway journey full of thoughts and raptures t which it was difficult to give utterance.



ANNECY.

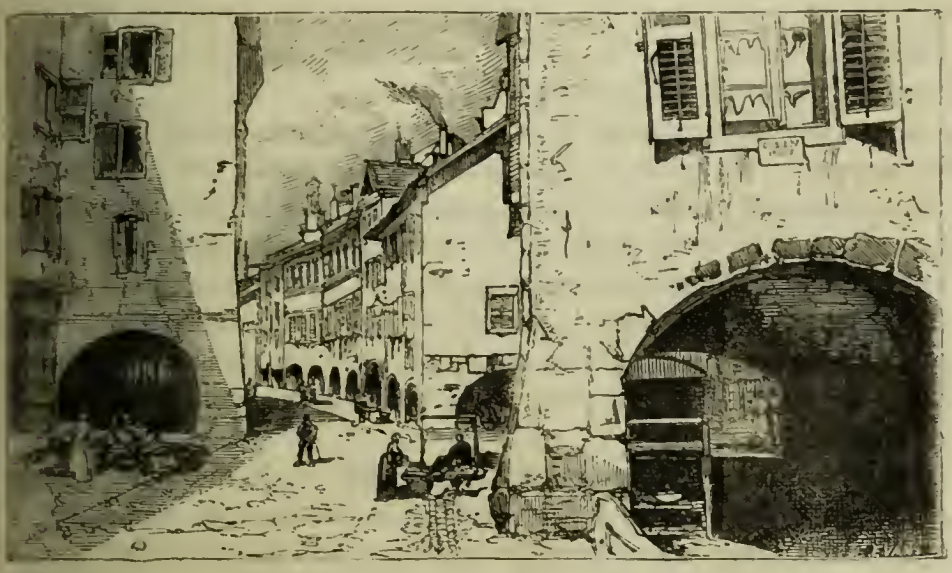
The more man sees of all the marvellous beauties of our earth, the more he must wonder what Paradise could have been; for these spots are earthly paradises, greater beauty than which can scarcely be conceived. The more intimate the acquaintance with them, the more fervently will the heart exclaim: "How wonderful are Thy works, O Lord! Heaven and Earth are full of Thy Glory!"

If then this earth, the abode of fallen man, is a reflection of such majesty and beauty as at times will take away all speech and power of expression: what, we may indeed ask, will be the revelation of that country whose shores are washed by the river with its waters clear as crystal, whose banks are overshadowed by the leaves of the Tree of Life?

Our mortal and finite natures possess as much beauty around them as they can bear. The body is yet unable to endure beyond a certain point: just as the children of Israel had to hide their faces from the brightness of Moses' countenance when he came down

from the mountain. But the more we see of the beauty and power, the majesty and grandeur, of the handiwork of God in the objects of His creation, the more are we able to realize a foretaste of those joys which shall be: the more intensely will the soul long at times to escape from the thraldom of this present life, and fly away to that eternal shore where such joys shall be unfading.

CHARLES W. WOOD.



OLD STREET IN ANNECY.

SPRING VOICES.

Hark! the April winds are ringing
In the woods their joyous chime,
Practising sweet strains to welcome
Back the summer's golden prime.

In the garden, in the meadow,
On the mountain, by the lake,
Freed from winter's ice-bound slumber,
Thousand tiny blossoms wake.

Tender azure, deep-dyed crimson
Bright as morning's richest glow,
Regal gold, imperial purple;
Such the varied tints they show.

Well may fancy's eye discover
In each gaily painted flower
Palace meet for Elfin sovereign;
Or some fairy's silken bower.

But the Christian on them gazing,
There far deeper thoughts may find;
Thoughts, of Eden's groves that whisper,
And the morning of mankind.

Even now their sweet-toned music
Comes like distant bells at night,
Saying, Flowers are angels' footprints,
Relics of the hours of light

When with clear seraphic voices
Rang earth's yet untrodden ways,
Teaching all the young creation
How to hymn its Father's praise.

ALICE KING.

A "CASE" OF MINE.

THE subject of "Memory" having been much discussed lately in connection with a celebrated trial, I propose placing before my readers a case that I had under my own ken and care for some time, that may be interesting as an illustration of "Imperfect Memory" versus "Imperfect Knowledge."

I was one day called upon to visit professionally a lady residing not far from my own house in Bloomsbury; the malady some common ailment, influenza or feverish cold, but accompanied by unusual nervous depression. I found my patient a woman about thirty or thirty-two years of age; of nervous temperament and rather constrained manner. A half suspicious, restless look in her eyes made me notice her more particularly than I otherwise might have done, and when I left the room the impression that I received was that she was a woman with a "story."

She was dressed in deep mourning, which made me remark to her sister, who was taking a few instructions from me concerning my treatment: "She has sustained a loss I see, and the nervous depression attendant on that has lowered the vital energies; thus an otherwise slight cold has fastened itself rather tightly on her."

"Yes," returned her sister; "she has indeed gone through much lately. Perhaps, as her doctor, you ought to be told more fully the details of her case; and, indeed, they may interest you from another point of view."

We sat down, and I will condense her narrative as far as possible.

My patient, Mrs. Hammond, and her husband were returning to England from the West Indies, where the latter had some property, when one of those unfortunate collisions between ships occurred which, though, unhappily, so frequent of late, were then rare. The collision took place in very rough weather: a high sea, and a boisterous, fitful wind.

A few were saved, among them Mrs. Hammond; but her husband was never seen again. Her baby, only six months old, was washed away. I did not attend very much to the particulars of the shipwreck, and all I can be certain of is that Mrs. Hammond, husbandless and childless, penniless and unconscious, was, with a few others, saved on that fearful night in one of the ship's boats, and taken on board by another homeward bound vessel of some sort that came to them soon after the calamity. Her husband's family were well off, and when the ship reached England, she proceeded to their house in

London. It was at the residence of her father-in-law that I had now seen the poor lady, just a year and a half after her bereavement.

"But the strange thing is this," continued my companion, "that she does not fret the least for the child, because all memory of having had one is gone! When returning to consciousness we are told that she cried piteously for her husband—but no one expression ever escaped her lips about the baby, and when naturally we condoled with her on its loss, she looked at us as if *we* had taken leave of our senses!"

"Perhaps it is God's mercy," I said, reverently. "The double grief might have upset her reason."

"But has it not already?" asked her sister. "She has as utterly forgotten the baby's having existed as if—well, as if in fact it never had!"

"Are you sure she has *really* forgotten it?" I questioned.

"Oh, certainly. She was never particularly fond of children. She was brought up by an aunt, separate from me and my brother Frank, very much to herself, and never took to children even of her own age. She used to say she hoped she never would have any, but when baby came, then," laughed Miss Dennis, "she made as great a fuss over it as anyone; at least, so I heard, for it was born in Jamaica."

"The child was certainly drowned?" I asked.

"Oh, yes. Out of seven little ones on board, only one was saved; the child of a poor steerage woman, who was taken back by the culprit steamer. Although we sometimes endeavour to rake up old memories to her mind, we do not try her too much. What would you advise?"

"Leaving her with her own sorrow, unconscious of her other loss," I answered. "If the truth ever dawns upon her, she will the better bear up against its consequent grief, the more strength of mind and body can be garnered up *now*. Keep her up in every way; cheerful looks about her, and plenty of light nourishing food."

"It is not *madness*, is it, doctor?" said poor Miss Dennis, looking me searchingly in the face.

"By no means; merely a case of suspended memory. The veil may be lifted any moment, though we could hardly wish for it." And to myself I said, "How many of us would *pray* that such a veil might fall upon our past!"

Her cold took its usual course, unattended by any worse symptom than ordinary, except for the natural depression consequent upon her peculiar circumstances. Two or three times I led the way cautiously to the subject we were interested in; I mean her sister and myself; but the suspicious, restless look in her eyes became so intense that I desisted, quite aware that she would be far more likely to think *us* insane than I could think her to be so.

In two or three weeks' time, I discontinued my attendance, with the

full understanding between her sister and myself that if any material change took place in her mental condition I should be made aware of it. Almost a year passed by without my hearing any more of her, when one afternoon, just as I had finished a hasty lunch, preparatory to going my afternoon "round," I received a note from Miss Dennis, saying how grateful she would be to me if I could look in upon her that afternoon. At three o'clock I was at their house, and found myself once more tête-à-tête with Miss Dennis.

"We agreed," she commenced, "that I should let you know anything special concerning your old patient, and I have really something very odd to tell you. About six months ago there was some little hitch in my sister's money affairs—you know her husband had some property in Jamaica, and it was considered advisable that some one should go out and see after the estate, which had been entrusted to careless hands on my poor brother-in-law's death. The money had been coming in very irregularly, so our brother Frank, who has lived in the north of England for the last seven years, volunteered to go and look up matters for her. He has not been well for some time, and his doctor said a sea voyage would be just the very thing for him. The long and the short of it is, that yesterday the mail arrived with letters from him for us both. He hopes, he says, to make everything straight very soon; found affairs in a great muddle, and believes the agent anything but trustworthy. In his letter to me was another enclosure marked 'Private.' This I took into my own room and read. The best way, doctor, is for you to read it yourself; it will not take you long."

Miss Dennis handed me the letter, of which the substance was as follows :—

"In one of my many rambles before the sun is well up, I was walking along a path near Kingston, when I came upon a woman with two children sitting by the roadside. The eldest was playing with little red berries, and seemed between two and three years old; the other, quite a baby. I should not have noticed them much but that the mother spoke crossly to the eldest as I passed, which caused me to look at him. As I did so, I was staggered to see what at the first glance seemed the image of Mary. Then the resemblance resolved itself into a still stronger likeness to poor Edward; not in the features, perhaps, but as he lifted his eyes to mine, the same half melancholy expression looked out from them. There was not the slightest likeness to the woman in him. I stopped in my walk and got into conversation with her, and as I did so the little fellow quietly put his hand in mine, as if we had been old acquaintances. She noticed it by saying, 'Well! that is a wonder! he hardly ever takes to anyone—little shy monkey!' The words were said playfully, but the *tone* was hardly motherly, I thought.

"I questioned her about different things, and as we talked the wind

got much fresher, and the morning betokened a rough day. I made a remark on the change in the weather.

"'It will be a stormy day, I fear,' she said; 'and it is so stupid of me, but ever since the shipwreck that I was in, I get quite upset when the wind blows high—it makes me shudder!'

"This remark naturally sharpened my wits, and I got from her the following particulars.

"She was going to England with her husband and baby, when, within a few days of arrival, the ship struck; a great many were washed overboard and never seen again. She and her husband and baby were in the water some time, and she and the baby were ultimately saved, though not together. She had given up both her treasures as lost, and had sunk into a kind of swoon, when a sailor placed the little thing dripping in her arms. 'My joy was great,' she said simply; 'and when all hope was gone of my husband being saved, I turned to the little wet bundle in my arms for comfort, and I believe the necessity for giving it food saved my life. With some others I decided to go back again in the other ship that offered to take us. What could I do without my husband in a strange land? So I never saw England, sir, and I came back without money, clothes, husband or child.'

"'Or child!' I repeated after her.

"'Yes, sir. It was not my child!' Here she burst into tears. 'It was not my own dear baby, but another! I found it out soon, but for many hours I nursed it as my own, for I lay in a sort of stupor, hardly noticing anything that occurred around me, and then, sir, what could I do but keep it? It was fatherless and motherless, as I was husbandless and childless, and so, sir, I have kept him ever since—this little one!' She touched the boy's forehead as she spoke.

"'How did you find out he was not yours?' I asked, with a strange fluttering hope at my heart.

"'By his clothes first, sir. You see, the collision happening in the night, there were hardly any of us dressed. He had only his little night-shirt on, that he had been snatched up in, and when given to me was wrapped in something thick and warm by the good sailor; so it was not till I roused a little, as some kind ladies offered me some of their own babies' clothing for him, that I found his shirt was fine and delicate—and my boy's was poor and coarse. It startled me at once and roused me up like a shock, and when I gazed eagerly into his eyes I saw he was not my own! My boy put out his little arms and chubby fingers, and crowed in my face—this one drank of my milk, and never cooed or chirped to thank me!'

"The tears were coming fast to her eyes. I pressed the little delicate hand firmer to mine, as the child looked up wonderingly to his foster-mother's face.

"'Were the clothes marked?' I asked.

"'Yes, sir; there was E. H. on the shirt, and I've always kept it by me safely.'

"Now, my dear sister, does not your opinion coincide with mine, that the child is our poor sister's lost darling?

"I saw the likeness to both parents at once; the shirt is marked with the initials that would have been on it (I bring the shirt with me), saved in the collision. In fact, everything points, in my opinion, to the same conclusion; and though I may get a scolding from my little wife at home, I have acted to my firm belief. I told the woman our story and fully convinced her. Indeed, she did not need much inducement to give the little fellow up. She had a certain feeling for him, she said, as having nursed him, but 'I have never quite got over the turn he gave me when I saw he was not my own. God forgive me!' she continued. 'I have tried to do my best for him. Last year I married again, sir, and have another dear little one now. My husband never took to Clyde (I called him after the ship, sir), but to please me he remains with us, and shares the little we have: but I don't think he'd fret at all at leaving us; he never took to us any more than my husband to him.'

"I saw her husband the next day, and with a small sum of money I got him to resign his paternal charge over the boy with great alacrity. Mrs. L——, the consul's wife, has kindly undertaken to fit him out respectably, and next week, if all goes well, I hope to start for England with my—as I firmly believe—long-lost nephew. But what I am to do with him when there I don't know. It's a queer business to force a child on a woman who says she never had one. Surely she'd say (and with seeming truth) that 'she ought to know best!' But, as I believe Providence ordered my steps here to recover the poor little fellow, I will trust the same good Providence to restore him to his natural protectors. If not, why it makes only one more mouth to feed. He is just Bobby's age within a week or two; they will be capital playfellows."

Here the letter entered upon other matters.

"And, now," said Miss Dennis, looking at me steadily with her large earnest eyes, "what are we to do?"

"When does your brother return?" I asked.

"He is on his way now. In three weeks, please God, he will be at home. To think of her little darling being alive and restored to her, and she not aware of his existence—or his ever having existed! It would be almost laughable, were it not so sad. How would you advise us to act?"

"I must consider," mused I. "We must be cautious. With a nervous temperament such as hers, a shock, even of joy, would be a great pain; and if the memory returns it might be with such a rush as to overthrow reason itself." After a few moments' silence, I proposed the following plan.

"They must meet in the ordinary course of circumstances; at least, it must seem so to her. She knows, of course, of her brother's having gone to Jamaica?"

"Oh, yes, and takes an interest in all the arrangements; often talks about him and the old places he will visit; is quite cheerful when we mention his returning soon, and paying us a visit of a week or two, after he has run down to see his wife and family. Indeed, she said it might enliven me, if he could bring one of his children with him."

"She has never seen Master Bobby, whom your brother speaks of as being about the same age as her own?"

"Never."

"I have it!" I exclaimed. "Introduce Master Clyde as Master Bobby, and see if any particular effect will be made upon her. Let your brother come as expected, and bring the boy with him. Is there a girl anywhere?"

"Yes, the eldest, Mary; named after herself."

The long and the short of it is this, that I advised the bringing up his little girl, Mary, and his supposed nephew, Clyde, whose real name, if indeed he was his nephew, was Edward; and let the mother and child be brought together as events would naturally occur. "And let me know," I concluded, "as soon as you can, if anything comes of our little stratagem."

I must now put another letter before my reader, for what followed will be better understood from Miss Dennis' narrative than from words of mine.

"DEAR DOCTOR,—As I have now really something to relate to you, I will write you my promised letter. I must just tell you that, for some days before Frank returned, Mary had seemed very uneasy in her mind; restless and fitful; complained of bad nights, and strange dreams; but on the day that Frank was expected and came, she was much calmer and herself again. She flew to meet him, and the servants taking forcible possession of the children at a previous hint of mine, we had some minutes in the drawing-room before they were brought in.

"On their arrival, Frank said, 'Your little namesake, Mary, and Master Bobby.'

"As her eyes fell on the boy, I saw her start. My heart beat fearfully.

"'So this is Bobby, is it?' she said, and just laid her hand on his head. 'He is like—not you,' and she looked fixedly at Frank; 'nor your wife'—here she paused, and turning away passed her hand across her brow. Frank signed to me to take the children out of the room; which I did; left them with the nurse, and returned. Mary had walked to the window, and for a few seconds we took no notice of her, but conversed on different subjects. Then I turned to her and said, 'I'll

leave you two together, Mary. There's lots of business to talk over and I'll go and look after the chicks.'

"She turned round, and one would have thought she had aged ten years in those few moments. She had a pained and wearied look, and her thoughts seemed far away as she answered, 'Do Ellen—and keep them quiet—and get Bobby—Bobby!' she repeated 'who is he like?—I don't think I can be well, I feel so strange.' And she turned back again to the window and looked out.

"I confess I thought of sending at once for you, she had such a wild oppressed look on her face. She was close to us, and yet one felt that she herself was very far away. I feared we had done wrong in testing her in this manner, and might kill her reason if we ventured further. I wished at the moment the boy had never been found, and went out of the room quite savagely. I remembered what you said about letting things come naturally, so we did not have the children in again, or even mention them, until a bright young laugh rang in our ears from the floor above, where a temporary nursery had been arranged.

"'They seem making themselves quite at home, Miss Polly, at any rate,' said my brother. 'I'll go and see the fun.' Mary had been unusually quiet. The business matters that had to be discussed seemed for the time to have lost their importance; she would break off in the middle of a sentence, the strange look come over her again, and her hand would be passed across her forehead and eyes. When Frank had gone she remarked, faintly, 'Bobby was not laughing—it was the girl's laugh.'

"How did she know? She then left the room, and I went to dress for dinner. Frank tells me that on going upstairs he found Polly in a state of glee. Nurse was remonstrating as she wiped a saucer, and Master Edward sitting utterly disconsolate in a very big arm-chair, with two big tears coursing quietly down his cheeks. At her papa's entrance Polly rushed to him. 'Oh papa! isn't he a funny boy? He's crying because nurse won't let him go and see Auntie Mary again! He says he wants to go to the lady, and stole away outside—nearly all the way down; and nurse had to carry him back, and then he cried again. Isn't he a funny boy, papa?'

"Frank quieted Polly with a look, and comforted Edward by saying that he would soon see the lady again if he was a good boy. He gulped down his tears, and Frank left him. The nurse was in the secret, and looked to me for orders in the matter. On the chance of Mary's visiting the room, we had left out on the table the little night shirt the baby had on when the poor woman discovered, on her recovery, that he was not her own child. It was thrown carelessly on the table with a few odds and ends and toys. She would think it was the workmanship of the nurse for the benefit of another little addition that Frank is daily expecting in his family.

"After I was dressed, I ran upstairs to have another look at the young ones, and met Mary just outside the door on the point of entering. She blushed red when she saw me. 'Come along, Mary,' I said, entering first and taking her hand. 'We'll have a romp before dinner —it will give us an appetite.'

"Edward was standing at the window. Polly was nursing a doll and finishing what had once been a large slice of cake. Strange to say, Mary spoke to Polly and not to 'Bobby,' though it was evident it was 'Bobby' she had come to see, for her eyes wandered to him, and rested with a puzzled look upon his face. She stood by the little table, and soon I saw her fingers take up the shirt. She turned and twisted it about for some time before she looked at it, then said, 'You have plenty to do now, I suppose, nurse; another little one expected.' 'Oh, yes, ma'am—the more the merrier, bless their little hearts.' She talked a deal more of nurse talk, but Mary's eyes were now on the shirt, and I saw her give a sort of shiver. I signed to nurse to go away with Polly. She did so, and still Mary only fingered the little shirt in a nervous sort of way. I stole to her side, and as she turned her look frightened me. 'Take that child away, Milly, take him away instantly!—I can't breathe the air near him! it stifles me!'

"'Hush Mary!' I said. 'You are not well, that is all. We will go away, not poor Bobby.' I got her downstairs, and prevailed on her to lie down. There seemed a struggle, a great struggle, going on within her, and so strong was the mastery she had to keep over herself that I saw she could hardly help thrusting me away from her in her efforts to throw off something that seemed forcing itself on her. Was it the memory returning, I thought—and prayed silently to God to aid it. She did not refer again to the boy, but her mental agony continued, and it was quite two hours before I could leave her. When, after at length prevailing on her to take a little food, she sank asleep, I stole thankfully away.

"Nurse was awaiting me. 'I can't keep the child quiet, miss. He keeps saying he wants to go to the lady. I don't know what to do with him, but I know not a bit of rest I shall get this blessed night.'

"'Get him interested in some little story, nurse, and keep them both quiet, for Mrs. Hammond has gone to sleep. I am tired myself, and will go and lie down.'—And what we had been so anxious to accomplish came about quite naturally, in this wise.

"An hour later, I got up from the sofa and stole to my sister's room. I found the door ajar, and on looking in, there was little Edward sitting very gravely by her bedside, one small hand on the coverlet. It was touchingly beautiful to see the little child sitting patiently waiting for its mother to awaken—awaken to memory, memory of love and of him. I could hardly move—I felt spell-bound. He never stirred, but his large blue eyes rested alternately on her face and on mine, and his tiny

hand crept closer to hers, but never ventured to touch it for fear awakening her, while on his face rested the half sad, wondering e pression so like his father's. I saw it was best as it was. God h doubtless brought him at the right time. He had taken away—I was about to restore, and He knew the way better than I.

"For half an hour we watched, when a slight movement told us th she had awakened. Still she did not open her eyes, but moved abo restlessly, and sighed as if waking from a dream. I stole behind screen, that *he* might be the first object she saw.

"She began speaking to herself—a habit of hers.

"'It is so strange! Dream upon dream—dream upon dream!—an when I open my eyes I almost expect to see the child before me, th in my sleep hangs round my neck till my blood warms at his touch She added, wearily, 'I think I must be going mad.' Still her ey were closed, and she seemed to be gently dozing off again, when th child quietly touched her hand, and in a voice of subdued ecstacy bur out, 'I want you for my mamma!' The eyes opened and rested o him—they seemed to grow larger and larger—she raised herself, an the boy, with his overflowing childish love, flung himself sobbing o the bed!

"For a moment she was stupefied, and passed her hand again acros her brow. It was but for a moment: the veil was raised, the mis cleared, and the sunshine of the pent-up mother-love overflowed wit a loud cry—'My child! my boy!'"

So ended the letter.

I indeed went to see them as soon as I could, and a joyful house hold I found. Mother and boy were inseparable—the long fast of th affections made them ravenous of love.

In this case the child's instinct seemed to lead him to his mothe as much as her instinct led her to him, but by what link the chain o memory was united we cannot conceive. He who constituted th brain and mind, as well as the heart and emotions, only knows—but s it was. They found conclusive evidence afterwards of young "Clyde" being indeed her son; and when once the memory was whole again various circumstances came to her mind to substantiate the woman' tale, without even the aid of the identity of the night-shirt with that o her child.

I told Mrs. Hammond and Miss Dennis that with their permission I would certainly write their strange story in my book of "Remarkable Cases."

You, reader, must judge whether it be one or no.

"COME AND TEACH US."

By Anne Beale.

"COME and teach us!" These words were uttered entreatingly, and reiterated, a few weeks ago, by children assembled in the great Board School of Tower Street, Seven Dials, which was opened in March, 1875, on the Sabbath, for religious instruction.

Before describing the young suppliants, let us glance at the locality on a week day. The large, commodious, ornamental school-house rises in the heart of one of the poorest neighbourhoods of this mighty city. We were told that it was built on the site of a rookery wherein swarmed thieves and evil people of all descriptions. We judge, indeed, of the dwellings that were, by those that are.

Opposite the majestic building is a row of black, ill-looking houses, in front of which old furniture stands exposed for sale. The street, if street it may be called, is one of those leading out of Seven Dials, and into an intricate labyrinth of streets, courts, and alleys.

Standing at its entrance, we face the one remaining Dial of the seven that gave its name to this curious septagonal enclosure, and we glance at six other streets leading diverse ways, two of which are St. Andrew's Street and Bird Fair. They are comparatively empty, and there is space to examine them and their wares. Although the population of these parts is said to be improved and improving, it is still poor, wretched, and degraded. We see miserable, depressed-looking people, turn where we will, and it is almost a relief to look away from humanity, and, entering Bird Fair, to glance at the thousands of cages that line the thoroughfare, both within and without the houses. All sorts of birds are confined within the wire and wicker-work, fretting out their lives, deprived of air and light. Here are larks and linnets, blackbirds and thrushes, pigeons and barn-door fowl, bullfinches and canaries, piled one upon another so thickly that you cannot see where the cages begin and end. A meagre-looking, thinly-clad woman is giving water through the grating to some pigeons, which are just able to poke their bills into the basin. They look fat and smooth, and sip daintily, and, their purveyor assures us, require to drink only twice a day. In this spot many a London sparrow is sold for a linnet, and birdcatchers haunt the suburb to entrap them; or they are even painted into canaries, and we tremble as we think of the trustful little birds that peck at our window-sill during the hard frost and frozen snow. In the midst of this street of live birds, is what is called a "stuffing shop;" so that, if the feathered creatures chance to die, they may still

be turned to account. Here they appear to hop airily on twigs, or t sit maternally on nests, in the midst of a grotesque and grim gatherin of "dry bones;" and when we see two human skulls, a black an white one, grinning at us through the window, we hurry back to Towe Street, in order to pursue our investigation of the surroundings of it Board School.

On the side of the building opposite Seven Dials is Lumber Court It is well named, for every window displays furniture and curiosities so old and queer that we wonder if anyone could be found to buy them. Impelled by curiosity we wander on, and we find ourselves, to our surprise, in a neat, well-built street, with brightish houses and clean windows; literally an oasis in a desert; for our next venture brings us to an alley where wretched women loll out of broken windows, and where we are told to walk in the middle of the way, lest we be robbed or insulted; where black men pop up from the cellars, half-skinned rabbits hang from the walls, and poles are protruded from the garret windows, whereon clothes are hung out to dry. And so, on and on, through notorious St. Giles's, where poverty and vice ask for Christian help and Christian teaching.

During six days of the week, nearly a thousand of the children of these crowded haunts are at least well-housed, well-taught, and well-disciplined in Tower Street Board School; and it is well to know that forty minutes are allowed each morning for religious instruction. On the seventh, it is still more important that the school-house doors shall be open to teach the young of Him who ordered His people "to keep holy the Sabbath Day." As it is, they see God's commandment broken from morning to night. The first thing that greets their eyes on the Sunday morning is the open-air market. St. Andrew's Street becomes a dense mass of human beings, who buy and sell meat, fish, and vegetables, for the Sunday dinner. Let those who would learn what humanity can be reduced to by poverty, crime, and, before all, by drink, visit this spot on a Sunday morning, and they must needs become missionaries either to soul or body. When they have watched the anxious, striving, starving multitude—a small portion of the population of the largest, richest, noblest city in the world—let them proceed to their Board School, and aid in teaching the young "to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy."

It was a Sunday evening in December when we visited the school. As we went from gas-lighted streets to gas-lighted house it seemed warmer and more cheerful by night than by day. We no longer wondered that the children throng the thoroughfares; in summer for air, in winter for light. Neither did we wonder at the noisy groups we encountered on the broad stone staircase of the noble school-house.

At the top of the first flight of steps we were greeted by the words,

Tell that man in there to let us in." It was strange to hear such an peal in a Sunday-school, more ragged than reputable; but we found erwards that "That man" had already more obstreperous urchins an he could manage single-handed. He occupied one of the smaller ss-rooms, which was furnished with boys enough for at least half a zen teachers. He stood in front of them with his Bible in his hand, iving to maintain order and gain attention. But they had not much ea either of quietude or obedience, and our presence rather increased an diminished their excitability.

"Of course you are always well behaved in the presence of ladies," hazarded.

"Yes, ma'am; yes, ma'am. Look at them big black beads," was e answer, in allusion to an unfortunate jet bracelet.

Our companion, who understood them better than their young icher, seized the noisiest by the collar, and put him out of the room, ying, in answer to our call for quarter, "We shall soon have him ying to come back."

There was a temporary lull, during which the teacher said, "What is e among so many? If only they would come and help us!"

Here lay the difficulty. Volunteers are few.

We again found only one teacher in another of the lesser class-rooms, here seventy infants were assembled, varying in age, apparently, from o or three to seven or eight. But this lady maintained a marvellous corum amongst her tiny boys and girls. She walked up and down fore them, now vigorously calling them by name; now preserving der by a wave of the hand, and always receiving a "Yes, miss," in turn. It was wonderful how well she remembered their names, and w she could have acquired them during that one short evening hour. It may, perhaps, be allowable to write that the loving and self-sacri-ing teacher, who has evidently won not only the attention, but the ection of these little ones, passes her week in the Soho Bazaar, and us devotes her only leisure hours to the blessed work for which she ems singularly adapted. Will no one come and help her?

The two principal class-rooms were better, though not sufficiently nished with teachers. That on the first floor was appropriated to the ls, the second floor to the boys; spacious, lofty, airy, well-lighted rooms. here were in all one hundred and thirty-two boys, one hundred and enty-one girls, and seventy-one infants, on the evening of which we ite. If teachers would volunteer, the three stories, which would ceive nine hundred children, might be filled. As it is, they are sufficient for the three hundred and twenty-four assembled. We were uck by this, as we wandered from class to class, inquisitive ourselves d exciting curiosity. Surrounding one of the horseshoe-shaped ss-desks were some fifteen boys, with no teacher in their midst. hey were mostly tidy and clean-faced, and, though small of stature,

were, they said, all variously employed in the shops and manufactorie of the locality. They were clamorous in giving information, all shout ing out at once their trades, ages, and parentage. Nor were they quit deficient in religious knowledge, which they were equally willing t impart. In reply to a few casual questions, these and similar answer were given, so eagerly that it was apparent how ready the speaker were to learn the way of eternal life. "God will make us good if w pray to Him." "He can hear us well enough." "If we are good w shall go to heaven." "What sort of life did Jesus Christ live? Wh mis'rable!" "No; a very good life. He come to save us."

Their ideas of our Lord seemed to arise from their own feelings, and the boy who used the word "mis'rable," looked particularly small and wan. Their eagerness was affecting, while in their midst; the words that followed us, as we wandered off to other classes, went to the heart They rose simultaneously, and with extended hands cried out:

"Teacher! teacher! Don't go away! Come back and teach us Come and teach us!"

Pausing before another class, we heard a complaint concerning unwashed hands. "Please, teacher, I swep' a chimley this morning," pleaded the culprit. "I wash 'em and my face with soap. Wouldn't come clean nohow."

Immediately a dozen pairs of small brown-black hands were protruded, and a dozen voices exclaimed, "And I wash mine, teacher; and I— and I—. But we works in Nixon's black-lead works, and they wont come white." That the effort had been made was apparent, for the pinkest and smoothest of nails gleamed like shells at the points of the little dark fingers. And very thin and delicate those fingers were for boys, some of whom were thirteen or fourteen years old, though looking eleven.

We were not surprised that the children should like to come to the cheerful, bright school from their cheerless homes. Gas blazed everywhere, and large coloured prints and maps adorned the walls. There were Scripture pictures, prints of animals, scientific drawings, and all to be enjoyed without coercion. It is the obligation, not the learning, that makes the board school unpopular; but doubtless this will wear away as its advantages become appreciated. And if it is opened, as in the present instance, on the Sunday for religious teaching also, those advantages will be trebled. But it is an expensive experiment, and costs nearly £150 per annum, the rent alone being £97 10*s*. Of course money is needed as well as teachers.

Those who have made the experiment invite Christians of all denominations to aid them. Churchman or Nonconformist will find enough to do, independently of sectarian differences. At present there are only twenty-seven teachers, most of whom are engaged in business during the week, and who find it difficult, after their six days' labour, to

teach twice on the seventh day. There are many unencumbered by trade, who express themselves anxious to devote a part of their time to God's service. They could scarcely do so more efficiently or please Him better than by helping to bring these stray lambs into the great Shepherd's fold.

It appears that young people who have been taught in ragged schools frequently make good teachers to children ragged as they once were. Several such, who owe, under God, a respectable position in life to lessons learnt in Gray's Yard Ragged School, sometimes come to Tower Street, and there earnestly and successfully impart what they have learnt under similar circumstances. And Tower Street, although not professedly a ragged school, but a Sunday school, has many a ragged child. One little girl looked especially pitiful, as she sat hatless, unkempt, and half clothed, patiently listening. She had had no tea, she said, as her companions gathered round her, with that instinctive feeling that impels the poor to help those still poorer. One such little starveling, who was at the school the previous Sunday, had been, during the week, convicted of stealing a pair of boots, and sent to a reformatory. Such an instance should suffice to rouse the sympathies of the rich and educated towards instilling principles of religion and morality into these young souls, who only consider detected crime criminal. And it would seem that the opening of these great board schools on the Sunday, for the special purpose of religious teaching, must be one means to this great end.

THE SNOWDROP.

SWEET harbinger of Spring, that blossoms here
  The fairest flower in Nature's sombre dress,
  Uplifting now thy pure white loveliness
Above the barren mould,—thou dost appear
Like messenger from some diviner sphere :
  A subtle charm is thine to soothe and bless ;
  When all around is drear and comfortless
Thou comest with the early, opening year.
Emblem of consolation ! In thy grace
  And perfect beauty, blooming to adorn
  Our cheerless paths till sunny seasons dawn—
As Love, which finds on earth a resting place,
Nor fears the cold and bitter world to face,
  Shall brighten lives that fate hath left forlorn !

STRONGER THAN LOVE.

I.

ONE autumn evening in the year 1812, a gay party of young people had assembled in the library of Monsieur Delapierre's Alsatian château. The house, charmingly situated on the slope of a wooded hill, once belonged to a noble family, the last scion of which perished in the Revolution. The building had consequently been left to decay, till Monsieur Delapierre, a wealthy financier, purchased the estate and restored the mansion.

Most of the rooms were newly decorated and furnished in the questionable taste of the Empire; but either the new proprietor or the architect he had employed preferred leaving the library intact, as it had been found in good preservation. The ceiling, therefore, still displayed, amidst its elaborate embellishments, the heraldic devices of the previous possessors. Massive book-cases of richly carved oak alternated with pedestals supporting busts of renowned Frenchmen; and, in the spaces above, paintings in fresco illustrated some passages in the life of the celebrity whose marble effigy graced the corresponding pedestal. Two innovations had been made, however. French windows now opened on to a broad terrace; and in the place of honour at the head of the room stood a bust of Napoleon, the fresco above representing Victory descending with a laurel wreath.

The young people had been sailing on the river, the silver windings of which were visible in the depths of the valley. Now they were scattered in groups about the room, as inclination drew them together. At one of the windows stood several girls, amusing themselves with weaving garlands of flowers which they had brought in from the garden.

"Are you weaving a wreath, Julie?" asked Eugène Delapierre as he joined them. "Who is the happy person for whose brow it is destined?"

"If I weave a wreath, it shall be for the greatest and best," answered the fair, bright-eyed Alsatian girl, looking up from her employment, a smile upon her lips.

"And whom amongst these do you deem the greatest and best?" said Eugène, glancing round at the busts that decorated the room.

Julie paused a moment, her wreath in her hand. Then she advanced towards Rousard, and placed the flowers on the sculptured brow. "Honour to him who in his song honoured woman," she said.

"Brava!" cried those assembled, in chorus.

"And you, Elise, what do you say?"

"Honour to the best," replied Elise, in a lower tone. "My wreath is not of roses but of marguerites, and it must rest upon the pure and holy."

Stepping forwards, with a low reverence she placed it upon the head of Fénélon.

"Now, Lucienne, it is your turn!" exclaimed Julie.

"Can you ask me my choice?" replied the lovely daughter of the house. "But my wreath must not be of fading flowers, but of the immortal bay."

So saying, she hastily plucked a few sprigs from the bay tree that grew on the terrace outside, and, twining them together, crowned the Emperor's bust with the shining green leaves. Her breast heaved, her eyes flashed, as the cry passed round, "Vive Napoleon! Vive l'Empereur!" One only remained silent. As Lucienne observed his grave and troubled countenance, she crossed the room to where he stood somewhat apart from the rest.

"What say you, Waldemar?" she asked. "Have you no greeting for our great hero?"

"You forget, Lucienne," he returned. "To me he can only appear in the light of the oppressor of my country."

"Ah, you do not love France!" she cried, her cheeks flushing, her lips quivering.

"Not love France? When France holds what is dearest to me in the world?" replied the youth. "But Napoleon is not France. Trust me, Lucienne, the time will come when France will find the idol she has set up is only a false god—a destroyer, not a regenerator, as you would believe."

"I will not hear you!" Lucienne exclaimed passionately. "If you really loved me, you would honour what I honour, and hate what I hate! But I am not first in your heart."

"Dearest, listen," said Waldemar Steinthal, taking her hand in both his. "I should not be worthy of you, should not dare to claim a place in your warm heart, did I not love my country and feel for my country's disgrace. When the forester had stricken down the fawn that now follows you so faithfully, did I not watch you binding its wound with these tender little hands? My fatherland lies bleeding, wounded by the mighty hunter, and shall I not at any rate lament over it, if I cannot help to save?"

Lucienne stood for a moment thoughtful. "Waldemar," she said at last; "you would fight against France, then, if the opportunity served? Fight against my country, and lose me."

"Lose you, Lucienne?" Waldemar questioned in sorowful accents.

"Yes. It would have to be so," the girl replied. "I would never marry the enemy of France."

At this moment a large black retriever, that had stolen into the room through the open windows, came up to Steinthal, and, licking his hand, testified his joy at the meeting.

"See, here is Gros Noir," said Waldemar, somewhat bitterly. "Next to Eugène, he likes me. He makes no question of French or German; he know where he loves, and is content."

Lucienne's dark eyes filled with tears: she drew closer to her betrothed. "Do you think I also shall not be content?" she said. "But you will let me love France?"

"God forbid I should wish otherwise, little enthusiast; what a terrible tyrant you must take me for," said Steinthal, a bright smile lighting up his handsome face, and chasing away the cloud that had rested upon it during the foregoing conversation.

Monsieur Delapierre, in Paris, and Herr Steinthal, in Leipsic, were old friends, and had been much engaged in business together, both being devoted to the delightful pursuit of money-making; the one following it as ardently in the gay capital of the French Empire as the other in the flourishing German town.

Herr Steinthal had an only son, and Monsieur Delapierre an only daughter, and the two worthy and careful fathers, putting their heads together, concluded that the best and most natural thing in the world would be the union of the two houses by the marriage of Waldemar and Lucienne. When Waldemar had passed through his college course and his year of travel, and Lucienne had left her pensionnat, it was considered time to announce to the young people the happiness that awaited them. Waldemar consequently was despatched to Monsieur Delapierre's château, where the family had assembled for their summer holiday, to make the acquaintance of his bride elect. Contrary to what might have been expected, young Steinthal and Mademoiselle Delapierre became devotedly attached to each other; the only cloud that ever appeared on their horizon arising from the difference in their political feelings. Waldemar, though this was unknown even to his father, had enrolled himself a member of one of the secret societies then so widely spread over Germany, while Eugène Delapierre, a lieutenant in an Imperial regiment, had innoculated his sister with that enthusiastic admiration the soldiers entertained for Napoleon, as well as with a fervent love for France. The young, however, seldom absorb themselves in politics; and, notwithstanding this difference, the days passed happily away, and hour by hour their hearts were drawn more closely together.

The marriage was not to take place till the following year, as Lucienne was only seventeen, and it seemed advisable that Waldemar should be inducted in his father's lucrative business before taking upon himself the duties of a Benedict. Waldemar's leave of absence extended to the time when cold winds and falling leaves would warn the Delapierre

family to return to their comfortable residence in Paris. A sunny month still remained to intensify the love between the betrothed, and the warm friendship that existed between the future brothers-in-law.

But the happiest time must come to an end. The first tears of real grief that Lucienne had ever shed fell from her eyes as she watched the carriage that conveyed her lover away.

"In one year," he had whispered, as he folded her in a parting embrace; and she, blushing like a rose, had avowed that she too would count the months till they met again.

II.

One little year! Who can say what events it may bring forth? Who can calculate what changes may come with the changing seasons? In 1812 France and Prussia were allies; but as early as March, 1813, war had been declared between them. Various successes and defeats attended the conflicting armies, till the battle of Leipsic turned the tide of victory in favour of the Germans. How could the German youth refuse to draw the sword for their country's freedom? Who refuse to enrol himself under her banner at her call? Not Waldemar Steinthal. Carried away by the ardent hope for the liberation of Germany, he had rushed to take part in the struggle, perhaps scarcely prepared at the moment for the personal loss that must ensue.

The sun was setting, lurid through the smoke that hung over the battle-field of Leipsic, on the evening of the 17th of October. The roar of the guns had ceased. The silence was dreadful after the deafening clamour of the fight, for it was the silence of death. Thousands of brave men, who in the morning had advanced to the combat full of ardour and hope, lay stretched cold and lifeless on the plain. That day victory had declared for Germany, and with victory the yoke that had pressed on the beloved fatherland was broken for ever. The French Empire had cast itself against the strong German heart, and been broken like a hollow earthen vessel against a rock. So had the Roman armies been driven back by Arminius. So had the burning eloquence of Luther destroyed the supremacy of the Pope; so shall a people conquer who, to use the words of Körner, think no sacrifice too great for that first of mortal blessings, their "country's freedom."

In a corner of the battle-field near the Elster, and within sight of the town of Leipsic, a group of young men had bivouacked. By the black tunic with red facings, and the oilskin cap, might be recognised the remnant of Lützow's brave band of volunteers. Several of their number were missing since the morning; two or three of those now gathered round the camp fire were wounded. In spite of the success of their arms they were silent and sad—partly from physical exhaus-

tion after the three days' struggle, partly from the blank left in their ranks, speaking to them of loss amidst the general gain.

"Cheer up, comrades!" exclaimed a junker, whom frequent duels and bürschen exploits had rendered familiar with danger, and on whose reckless temperament the horrors by which he was surrounded made little impression. "Here is wine, Bacchus be thanked! Drink, comrades, and quench the smell of powder in glorious nectar!"

"Give some here quick, Heinrich," said Waldemar Steinthal. "Max is faint from his wound."

"Not a drop, till you are ready to pledge me in a cup to Blucher, the old hacksword!" Heinrich replied.

"Give it here," said Waldemar, once more. "We will drink to Blucher with all our hearts. That's a good fellow! Now, Max, drink."

As he spoke, he held a flask to the lips of a youth lying on his cloak beside him. After Max had tasted the wine, he strove to raise himself on his elbow.

"It is nothing," he said, sinking down again. "Only a cut about the head. Lieschen will think none the worse of me for a scar." And a smile stole over his pallid face.

"Another cup," cried Heinrich. "To the memory of Queen Louise, the good angel!"

Again the cups clinked. Several rose to their feet, while they reverently mentioned the name of the woman so much beloved.

"One also to the memory of our comrade, Karl Theodor," exclaimed another of the volunteers.

"To Körner!" shouted the band. Heinrich Bergholt struck up the well-known strain, "Das Schwert," and soon the wild chorus, "Hurrah, hurrah!" rang through the battle-field.

A handsome, blue-eyed youth, scarcely more than a boy, at this moment joined the circle, and throwing down an empty pail, sank on the ground, covering his face with his hands.

"Be silent, Heinrich," he cried, after a few minutes, lifting his head and dashing the tears from his eyes. "Is this a time for singing? But you would sing in Gehenna, I believe, some of you."

"What is the matter, Ludwig? Where is the water?" asked Heinrich, ceasing his song.

"Gone!" returned Ludwig. "I had to go far up the river, all about here, and all the ponds, are bloodstained. If you had but seen the sights I have! The poor dying wretches screaming for water. How do I know whether they were French or Germans? They were human beings, I suppose. What could I do but give them what I had?"

"Here comes Wolstang with his pail full, fortunately for us, thou soft-hearted boy," said Heinrich. "Who would have thought thou wouldst have used thy bayonet as thou didst to-day? Have some wine, and a truce to thy tears. Was der Henker!"

As Bergholt made this exclamation, he started back with an expression of alarm that caused a laugh, as a large black retriever cleared the circle with a leap, and dashed on to where Waldemar was half sitting, half reclining. The dog darted upon him with a cry almost human in its expression of joy, licking his hands and face. Then, changing his tone to a whine, he pulled at his coat, and showed by his action that he desired Steinthal to follow him.

"Good heavens, it is Gros Noir!" Waldemar exclaimed. "Eugène must be here. Heinrich, Julius, Fritz, come with me." He started up, taking the cloak on which he had been lying over his arm. "Not you, Ludwig, you have had enough, my lad. Bring a torch with you; it has become as dark as the jaws of death."

The dog, finding that his appeal had been understood, ran on before, bounding over the incumbrances by the way. The men followed more slowly over the ground.

At last the dog stopped, and raising his head uttered a howl that made the listeners' blood run cold.

Steinthal seized the torch from his comrade's hand, and stooped down over a heap of slain. There, as he had foreboded, lay the brother of his once-promised bride—Eugène Delapierre. A few drops of wine from the flask they had brought with them were poured between the rigid lips, and then carefully the four youths raised the dying man. They placed him in Waldemar's cloak, and, each taking a corner, they gently bore him in this improvised litter to their camp fire, Gros Noir following close behind.

With aching heart, Steinthal endeavoured to restore his friend to consciousness; his tears falling fast the while over the well-known face, on which the seal of death was already set. But it seemed to be Gros Noir licking his master's cold face that at last recalled for a moment the fast ebbing tide of life. Eugène opened his eyes, and on seeing Waldemar smiled faintly.

"Brother," he murmured, endeavouring to hold out his hand.

Waldemar clasped it, his strong breast heaving with the emotions and recollections that word had called forth. Eugène made a sign for Waldemar to raise him. With feeble hand he pointed to his breast.

"Take it," he gasped. "Her portrait—letters—she loved you, though she broke off with you. She will know I died—for France!"

These words were the last effort of expiring nature. A few struggling sighs, and Eugène Delapierre lay dead in Waldemar's arms.

Waldemar covered the form of his friend with the cloak on which he had been laid, and leaving Gros Noir stretched beside the body, retired to a little distance, where, his face buried in his hands, he gave himself up to grief. Not long, however, was he left to the indulgence of his sorrow. Suddenly the bugles sounded to horse,—the French were retreating under cover of the night. The events of that memorable

retreat are matters of history. On the night of the 19th Waldemar Steinthal slept in his father's house.

Herr Steinthal, on the first rumour of the German outbreak, had conveyed himself and his money bags to a place of safety, and the house had been occupied by the sick and wounded ever since the battle of Lutzen. Waldemar, however, found a small room where he could be alone. He had just been assisting to lay in the grave his two dearest friends, Eugène Delapierre and the tender-hearted young Ludwig Krone, killed in the mêlée when the explosion took place at the Lindenau bridge.

Now, at last, Waldemar had time to give to sorrow. He opened the packet taken from the breast pocket of Eugène's coat. The first thing that met his eyes was a beautifully executed miniature of Lucienne. There were the rosy lips he had kissed; there the dark eyes that had looked lovingly into his; there the abundant and glossy hair, a lock of which still rested next his heart. He raised the portrait to his lips. Alas! never more would he meet the light of those speaking eyes, never more bask in the sunny smile of which the picture gave a faint reflex. With a bursting sigh, he laid the miniature by his side, and took up the two or three letters that accompanied it. The sight of the well-known handwriting affected him almost as deeply as the pictured face. The letters were addressed to her brother; one seemed to be in answer to some question or expostulation.

"You ask me if I no longer love Waldemar Steinthal. As well ask me if I no longer breathe." So it ran. "You men make sacrifices for your emperor and your country; we women have also sacrifices to make. You give your swords, we give our hearts; and mine lies torn and bleeding, broken by this bitter strife between all I hold dear. Sleeping or waking, I have ever one image before me—Waldemar armed against France; perhaps against thee. My prayers are distracted. How can I implore divine aid for one, while I weep to think of the other's fall? Do not think I blame Waldemar; he could not have done otherwise. It is no wrong, but cruel fate, that has come between us. Speak to me no more of marriage; henceforward I dedicate myself to my God, to the unfortunate, and to thee, my brother."

Waldemar read no more. The letters did but confirm what he knew before.

"Oh my country," he cried aloud; "thou hast cost me much!"

III.

Fifty-seven years passed away. Nature, ever young, ever renovating the old, and restoring the lost, was fresh and fair as formerly around the château of the Delapierres, now owned by an aged lady, the last of her race. Deeply affected she had been by the successes of the Ger-

mans, and the march of an invading army through the province, but she had opened her doors to the wounded indiscriminately, whether French or German.

One evening, after a skirmish in the neighbourhood, several wounded soldiers were brought to her well-known habitation. She came into the hall to receive them, and to give orders as to their disposal. Pale and sad she looked in her semi-religious dress of black serge, her silver grey hair put away under a close white cap, as she stood there, speaking words of comfort and encouragement to the poor fellows who had claimed her hospitality. And thus, in works of mercy, she found alleviation of the life-long sorrow that was consuming her.

Seven or eight had been thus received; another had yet to come they told her. She waited. He was borne in on a litter, for he had been wounded in the knee. A handsome youth, with deep blue eyes, and fair hair and moustache. When Mademoiselle Delapierre caught sight of his face, she uttered a cry and tottered forward, but restraining herself with an effort, she ordered that he should be conveyed to her own chamber. "I myself will take charge of him," she said to the servant who awaited her orders.

The woman, who had grown old in the Delapierres' service, would have expostulated, knowing her mistress's feeble state; but Mademoiselle Delapierre, with a movement of her hand, signified her determination. The young man was laid in bed and his wound dressed. It proved not to be serious; a simple fracture, that would scarcely produce permanent lameness. When Mademoiselle Delapierre entered the room to take up her night watch, he was able to thank her for her kind care. His hostess scarcely appeared to hear what he said; her gaze was fixed on his countenance.

"You are German," she said.

"I am, madame; I come from Leipsic," was the answer.

"And your name?"

"Waldemar Steinthal."

"I knew it!" Mademoiselle Delapierre exclaimed, clasping her hands.

The youth regarded her with surprise.

"Your father—it must be—was once—that is, I once knew him," said Mademoiselle Delapierre, in broken accents. "Waldemar Steinthal, of Leipsic, you say?"

"The same, madame."

"You are young to be his son?"

"He did not marry till late in life, madame," the youth replied. "He suffered from some early disappointment, I have heard."

The old lady trembled more and more; she sat down by the side of the bed. "Tell me more," she said. "Have you brothers and sisters?"

"One brother, and one sister, madame—Eugène and Lucienne French names, you see. But my father had tender recollections o France, he used to say."

Mademoiselle Delapierre pressed her hand to her side. Her heart beat painfully. "And your mother?" she asked.

"Is an angel of goodness, madame," the young man returned "She loved my father. She knew all, and was contented with his friendship. They were happy."

"Were? You speak in the past tense, my child."

"Alas, yes!" answered the youth. "My father has been dead some years. But my mother still lives; lives to bless you, madame, for your kindness to her son."

There was silence for a few minutes; a flood of tender remembrances overpowered her. Then the old lady rose, and opening a cabinet, took from a casket a locket set with brilliants. She touched the spring. Inside was a knot of brown and black hair intertwined, with the initials and date, W. S. L. D., 1812. She stood for a moment as if lost in meditation, then closing the locket, she returned to the side of the bed, and placed it, together with the gold chain to which it was attached, in the youth's hand.

"When you return to Leipsic, give this to your sister," she said faltering with emotion. "Tell her it is from Lucienne Delapierre."

"Madame? You ——"

"Hush!" Mademoiselle Delapierre interposed. "You have talked enough. You must sleep now. I also am weary. Good-night."

She stooped and pressed a kiss on the young man's brow. He felt a tear fall, and her lips were cold. She sank back in the chair-lounge that had been placed beside the bed, and soon the silence of night was only broken by the regular breathing of the wounded man.

Early in the morning, the old servant came in to relieve her beloved mistress from her watch. But the words she was about to utter were frozen on her lips. Both the inmates of the room were sleeping; the young soldier calmly and soundly, soon to awake to renewed life. Mademoiselle Delapierre slept still more calmly and soundly, a placid smile on her face, pallid as snow. Her waking would be in another world, whither her spirit had flown to rejoin his, the betrothed of her youth, loved so fondly in spite of all adverse influences.

God had joined these two hearts together, but man, with his ambition, his cruel enmity, had put them asunder. In Heaven there is peace.

THE ARGOSY.

MAY, 1876.

EDINA

By Mrs. HENRY WOOD, Author of "East Lynne."

CHAPTER XIII.

MR. PELLET IN THE CHURCHYARD.

TRENNACH churchyard was a lonely place at all times: but it looked particularly so in the twilight of a dull evening. The trees took fantastic shapes to the eye; the grave-mounds and the head-stones reminded you unpleasantly that you yourself must sometime lie beneath them.

Especially grey were the skies this evening; for, though it was summer weather, the day had been a very dull day: and Mr. Blase Pellet, sitting in the middle of the churchyard on the old stump of a cut-down tree, looked grey and gloomy as the weather and the graves.

Since the departure from Trennach of Rosaline Bell—for whom Mr. Blase Pellet did undoubtedly entertain a fond and earnest affection, whatever might be his shortcomings generally—he had found his evening hours, when the chemist's shop was closed for the night, hang heavily on his hands. With the absence of Rosaline, the two chief relaxations in which Mr. Blase employed his leisure were gone: namely, the cunning contrivings to meet her, either at her home or abroad; and his watching the movements of Frank Raynor. The young man's jealously of the latter and Rosaline burnt as fiercely as ever, tormenting him to a most unreasonable degree: though, indeed, when was jealousy ever amenable to reason? There was no longer any personal intercourse between Frank Raynor and Rosaline; Blase knew quite well that could not be, for Frank was here, and she was at Falmouth; but he had felt as sure, ever since she went, that their intercourse was continued by letter, as that he was now sitting on the stump of the tree.

Jealousy needs no proof to confirm it: our great master-intellect has told us that it makes the food it feeds on. And upon this airy kind of unsubstantial food had Mr. Pellet been nourishing his suspicions of the mutual correspondence—which existed in his imagination alone. He had watched the postman in a morning, he had waylaid him, and by apparently artless questions had got him to disclose to whom the letter was addressed, which he had just left at Dr. Raynor's: and the less proof he could find of the suspected correspondence, the brighter did his untenable jealousy burn. For it was not often that the postman could say the letter which he might have chanced to leave at the Doctor's house was for Mr. Frank Raynor. Sometimes it would be for the Doctor himself, sometimes for Miss Raynor; but very rarely for Frank. Frank's correspondence did not seem to be an extensive one. This might possibly have satisfied an ordinary young man: it only tended to strengthen Mr. Blase Pellet's raging doubts: and now, on this ill-favoured evening, those doubts had received "confirmation strong as proofs of holy writ."

Since there could be no longer love-meetings of his own to seek, or surreptitious dodgings of other people to pursue, Mr. Blase Pellet was rather at a loss to know what to do with his evenings. To render him justice, it must be admitted that he did not follow the Trennach fashion, and spend them at the Golden Shaft. He was a steady young man; in some respects better than many of his neighbours. Finding the hours lie on his hands, he took to look in unceremoniously at the houses of his acquaintance, and pass an interlude in chat more or less agreeable. On this evening he had so favoured Clerk Trim: and it was in crossing the churchyard, after quitting that functionary's dwelling, that he had come to an anchor on the stump. Bitter anger was aroused within him; raging jealousy; a tumultuous thirst for revenge. For, in the clerk's house he had just been furnished, as he believed, with the confirmation yearned for.

When Frank Raynor, so lightly and heedlessly, had sent Clerk Trim to Tello, to inquire for certain imaginary letters at the post-office there, he little thought what grave consequences would arise from it in the future. Just for the sake of getting the clerk out of the way during the ceremony of the stolen marriage, he had invented this fruitless errand. When the clerk came back in the course of the day, and reported to him that no letter was lying for him at the post-office at Tello, the man added, "And I've taken care not to mention to a soul, sir, where I've been, as you desired, neither will I." "Oh, thank you, but I don't in the least mind now whether you mention it or not," rejoined Frank in the openness of his heart. For, now that the object was attained, it did not matter to him if all the world knew that he had sent the clerk to Tello.

Clerk Trim was naturally a silent man, and therefore he had experienced no temptation to speak of it, in spite of the release given him:

but on this evening, talking with Blase Pellet of Tello, he said that he had been there lately. Mr. Blase expressed some surprise at this, knowing that journeys were rare events with the clerk; and then Trim mentioned what he had gone for: to inquire for a letter at the Tello post-office for Mr. Frank Raynor.

That was enough. And a great deal more than enough. Blase instantly jumped to the conclusion that it was *there*, through the Tello post-office, that the correspondence with Rosaline was carried on. And perhaps it was not unnatural that he should think so.

Forth he came, boiling and bursting, crossed the stile, and dropped down on the tree-stump, unable to get any farther. With his bitter indignation mingled a great deal of despair. In that one miserable moment he began to see that he might indeed lose Rosaline. To lose her would have been anguish unspeakable; but to see another gain her was simply torment—and that other the detested gentleman, Frank Raynor. Blase Pellet had not a very clear idea of social distinctions, and he saw no particular incongruity in Frank's making her his wife.

"I've kept quiet as yet about that past night's work," said Mr. Pellet to himself, "but I'll speak now. I kept quiet for her sake, knowing what pain it would bring her; not for his; and because—Well, any way," he added, after a long pause, "I must feel my way in it. If I can only drive him away from Cornwall for good, that would be enough; and then I'd draw in again. I heard him tell old Float that he meant to be off to London soon and settle there: let him go and leave me and Rose and these parts alone. I'll help to drive him there; and when he's gone I'll keep silent again. But now—how much will it be safe to say?—and how can I set about it?"

Leaning forward, his two hands placed on his knees, pressing them almost to pain, his eyes fixed on the opposite hedge, he thought out his thoughts. Blase Pellet was of an extremely concentrative nature: he could revolve and debate doubts and difficulties in his own mind, until he saw his way to bring them out straight in the end, just as patiently and successfully as a student works out a problem in Euclid. But the difficulty Blase was trying to solve now was not easy.

"I *can't* say I saw it," debated he. "I can't say I heard it. If I did, people would ask five hundred questions, as to where I was, and how it came about, and I might have to tell all. I don't care to do that. I won't do it, unless I'm forced. Let him go away and leave her alone hereafter, and he shall get off scot free for me. If I told of him, I should have to tell of her—that she was present—and she'd not like it; neither should I, for I'd be sorry to bring the pain and exposure on her. She ought to have denounced him at the time—and she was a regular simpleton for not doing it: but still it would not be

pleasant for me to be the one to proclaim that she was there and witnessed it all. No, no: I may not say I know *that:* I dare not say I was a witness myself. I must find some other way."

The other way seemed to be a mile off. Mr. Pellet took his eyes from the hedge, and his hands from his knees; but only to fix them on the same places again. The stump of the tree was as uneasy a seat as its once green and flourishing topmost bough must have been, to judge by the restless fit that was upon him as he sat on it.

"Could I say I dreamt it?" cried he suddenly, ceasing his shuffling, and holding his head bolt upright. "*Could* I? I don't see any other way. Let's think it out a bit."

The thinking out took a tolerably long time yet, and Mr. Pellet did not seem altogether to like his idea. It was pretty nearly pitch dark when he at length rose from the stump, sighing heavily.

"I must be uncommon cautious," said he. "But it's just one of those ticklish things that admit of no openings but one. If Rosaline got to know that I saw—and told—she'd just fling me over for ever. I think a word or two of suspicion will be enough to drive him away, and that's all I want."

Now in the main, Blase Pellet was not a hard-hearted or vindictive young man. His resentment against Frank Raynor arose from jealousy. Even that resentment, bitter though it was, he did not intend, or wish, to gratify to anything like its full extent. Believing that certain testimony of his could place Frank's neck in jeopardy, he might surely be given credit for holding his tongue. It is true that his caution arose from mixed motives: the dread of exasperating, or in any way compromising Rosaline; the dislike to mix himself up with the doings of that past night; and the genuine horror of bringing any man to so dire a punishment, even though that man were Frank Raynor.

Pondering upon these various doubts and difficulties, and failing to feel perfectly reassured upon them in his own mind—or rather upon what the result would be if he moved in the matter—Mr. Pellet went slowly home through the dark and deserted street; and ascended straight to his chamber, which was an attic in the roof. There, he put himself down on the side of his low bed in much the same musing attitude that he had sat on the tree-stump.

"Yes, it must be a dream," he decided at length, beginning to unbutton his waistcoat preparatory to retiring. "There is no other way. I must not say I was there and saw it—they'd turn round upon me and cry out, Why didn't you tell before now? And I can't and I won't bring in Rosaline's name—which I should have to do if I stated the truth outright. But I can say I dreamt it: dreamt that Bell is lying at the bottom of the shaft; and keep up the commotion a bit. They can't turn round on me for *that.* Folks do dream, and all the world knows they do."

As the days went on at the Mount, the lovers' meetings became more rare. Far from being able to steal out every evening, Margaret found that she could hardly get out at all. She was virtually a prisoner, so far as her evening's liberty was concerned. Either she had to stay in, reading to Lydia, or else Mrs. St. Clare would have her in the drawing-room. Upon only a half movement of Daisy's towards the open glass doors, Mrs. St. Clare would say, "You cannot go out in the evening air, Daisy: I shall have you ill, like Lydia."

Evening after evening Frank Raynor betook himself to the grounds about the Mount, and lingered in their wilderness, waiting for Daisy. Evening after evening he had to go back again as he came, not having seen her. But one evening, when his patience was exhausted, and he had taken the first step of departure, Daisy came flying through the trees and fell into his arms.

"I was determined to come," she said, a nervous sobbing catching her breath. "I am watched, Frank; I am perpetually hindered. Mamma has just gone to her room with a headache, and I ran out. Oh Frank, this can't go on. I have so wanted to see you!"

"It has been uncommonly hard, I can tell you, Daisy, to come here, one evening after another, and to have to go back as I came."

"This is the *first* opportunity I have had. It is indeed, Frank. And if that Tabitha should come prying into the drawing-room, as I know she will, and finds me gone out of it, I don't care. No, I don't."

He took her upon his arm and they paced together as formerly. The moon was bright to-night, and flickered through the leaves on Daisy's head.

"Of course this cannot go on," observed Frank, in assent to what she had just said. "I should make a move at once, but for one thing."

"What sort of move?"

"To leave Trennach. The reason I have not done so, is this, Daisy. In speaking again the other morning to my uncle, telling him that I must go to London, he made no further opposition to it: only, he begged me to remain with him until Edina returned ——"

"Where is she going?" interrupted Daisy.

"To Bath. On a week or ten days' visit to Major and Mrs. Raynor. Daisy, I should not *like* to leave my uncle alone; he is not well; and therefore I will stay, as he wishes. But as soon as Edina is back here, I will go to London, and see about our future home."

"Yes," said Daisy. "Yes."

She spoke rather absently. Indeed, in spite of the first emotion, she appeared to be less lively than usual; more pre-occupied. The fact was, she wanted to ask Frank a question or two, and did not know how to do it.

"Edina goes to-morrow," he resumed. "She intends to be back in a week's time; but I give her a day or two longer, for I know how

unwilling they always are at Spring Lawn to let her come away. After that, I wind up with the Doctor, and go to London. And it will not be very long then, Daisy, before I am back here to claim you. I shall soon get settled, once I am on the spot and looking out: the grass will not be let grow under my feet. It won't take above a week or two."

How sanguine he was! Not a shadow of doubt rested on his mind that the "week or two" would see him well established. Daisy did not answer. Had Frank chanced to turn his head as they walked, he would have seen how white her face was.

It was a simple question that she would ask. And yet, she could not ask it. Her dry and quivering lips refused to frame the words. "Were you so very intimate with Rosaline Bell?—and did you really love her?" Easy words they seem to say; but Daisy could not get them out in her terrible emotion.

And so, they parted, and she had not spoken. For the hour was late already, and she feared to stay out longer. And Frank went home unsuspicious and unconscious.

It was on the following morning that certain rumours were afloat in Trennach. They had arisen the previous day: at least two or three people professed to have then heard them. The miners congregated in groups to discuss the news; Float the druggist and other tradesmen stood at their shop doors, to exchange words on the subject with the passers-by. It was said that Josiah Bell was lying in the Bottomless Shaft. Instead of having walked off in some mysterious manner, to return some day as mysteriously—as his wife believed—he was lying dead in that deep pit on the Bare Plain.

But—whence arose these rumours? what was their foundation? Nobody could tell. Just like other unaccountable rumours that float about us and are whispered from one to the other in daily intercourse, it seemed that none could trace their source.

This same morning was the one of Edina's departure for the neighbourhood of Bath. Frank was about to drive her to the railway station. The gig was already at the door, the small trunk strapped on behind: for she never encumbered herself with much luggage. Frank was in the surgery, busying himself until she should appear, and talking with his uncle, when the door opened, and Ross, the overseer, came in. He had not been well lately, and had come occasionally to the surgery for advice.

"Have you heard this new tale they've got hold of now, Doctor?" asked he, while Dr. Raynor was questioning him of his symptoms. "It's a queer one."

"I have heard no tale," said the Doctor. "What is it?"

"That the missing man is lying at the bottom of the old shaft on the Plain. Bell."

A moment's startled pause; a rush of red to his brow; and then Frank spoke up hastily from his place amid the bottles.

"What an utter absurdity! Who says so?"

"It is being said among the men," replied Ross, turning to him. "They can talk of nothing else this morning."

The colour was receding from Frank's face, leaving it whiter than usual.

"Bell at the bottom of the shaft on the Plain!" exclaimed Dr. Raynor. "But why are they saying it? Who says it?"

Ross extended his hand, and pointed to the knots of men in the street, some of whom were in view of the window. "All the lot of them, Doctor. They are talking of nothing else."

"What are their grounds for it?"

"I've not got to them yet. I don't think they know."

Since the first hasty words, Frank had remained dumb, apparently paying attention to his physic. He spoke again now in a sharp, rasping tone; which was very unusual, and therefore noticeable.

"It is not *likely* that there are grounds for it. I wonder, Ross, you can come here and repeat such nonsense!"

"The place is agog with it; that's all I know," replied Ross, sulkily, as he went out. He could not bear to be found fault with.

Dr. Raynor followed him to the door. After a glance up and down the street at the men, collected in it, he returned to the surgery.

"It is evident that something or other is stirring them," he observed to Frank. "I wonder what can have led to the report?"

"Some folly or other, Uncle Hugh. It will die away again."

Dr. Raynor stood near the window; his eyes were fixed on the outer scenes, but his mind was far away. Frank, who had made a finish of his physic, was buttoning his coat.

"I have never believed aught but the worst, since Bell's disappearance," said the Doctor. "Others have expected him to come back again: I never have. Where he may be, I know not: whether accident, or aught else of ill may have chanced to him, I know not: but I entertain no hope that the man is still in life."

There was a pause. "Have you any reason for saying that, sir?" asked Frank, somewhat hesitatingly.

"No reason in the world," replied Dr. Raynor. "At least, no tangible reason. I am an old man, Frank, and you are a young one; and what I am about to say you will probably laugh at. I did not like the look of Bell when we last saw him."

Frank was at a loss to understand: and said so.

"I did not like that grey look on his face," continued the Doctor. "Do you remember it?"

"Yes, I do, Uncle Hugh. It was very peculiar. Sometimes when a person is ill, or going to be ill, the face will take quite a grey tinge

from the loss of colour, and we say to him or her, You are looking grey this morning. But the grey shade on Bell's face was quite different."

"Just so," assented the Doctor. "And it takes an educated eye—or, I would rather say, an eye possessing a peculiar discernment—to be able to distinguish the one shade from the other: but, to the eye which can do so, it is unmistakable. The grey hue that was on Bell's face I had observed three times before during my life, in three different men: but in each of the cases it was the forerunner of death."

Dr. Raynor's voice had taken a solemn tone. Frank, far from laughing, seemed to catch it as he spoke.

"Do you mean the forerunner of fatal sickness, sir?"

"Only in one of the cases, Frank. The man had been ill for a long while, but his death was entirely unexpected and sudden. The other two had no sickness at all, short or long: they died without it."

"From accident?"

"Yes, from accident. I should not be likely to avow as much to anybody but you, Frank, and run the risk of being ridiculed: but I tell you that when I saw Bell come in here that morning with the peculiar grey look on his face, it shocked me. I believed then, as firmly as I ever believed any truth in my life, that the man's hours were numbered."

Frank neither stirred nor spoke. Just for the moment he might have been thought a statue.

"Where Bell is, or where he got to, I know not; but from the time I first heard of his disappearance, I feared the man was dead," added Dr. Raynor. "The probability was, I thought, that he had fallen down in some fit, that had been, or would be, fatal. And I confess the great marvel to me throughout, has been, that his body could not be found. If this rumour be true—that he is lying at the bottom of the used-up shaft—the marvel is accounted for."

"But—is—is it likely to be true, sir?" cried Frank, in hot remonstrance.

"Very likely, I think," replied the Doctor. "Though I cannot imagine what should bring him *there*."

"Are you ready, Frank?" asked Edina, appearing at the door in her grey plaid shawl and plain straw bonnet. "Good-bye, papa. I have been looking for you."

Dr. Raynor stooped to kiss his daughter quietly: he was not a demonstrative man. Hester was at the door: the boy held the horse's head. Frank helped Edina in; and, taking the reins in his hand, followed her.

"You will not stay too long, Edina?"

"Only the eight or nine days that I am going for, papa."

They drove on. It was a lovely summer's day; and Edina, who enjoyed the sunshine, the balmy atmosphere, the blue sky, the waving

trees, and everything else pertaining to this serene, out-door life, sat still, and looked about her. Frank was unusually silent. In point of fact, the rumour he had just heard, touching Bell, had well-nigh struck him dumb. Edina might have wondered at this prolonged silence of his, but that she was deep in thought herself.

"Frank," she began, as they neared the station, "I wish you would answer me a question."

He glanced quickly round at her, dread in his heart. Did the question concern the Bottomless Shaft?

"Do you know whether anything is amiss with papa?"

It was like a relief; and Frank, ever elastic, brightened up at once.

"Amiss with him? In what way, Edina?"

"With himself; with his health. In the last few weeks he seems to have changed so very much: sometimes he seems quite like a broken-down man. Don't you see that he is ill, Frank?"

"Yes, I am sure he is," replied Frank readily. "But I don't know what it is that's the matter with him."

"It seems to me that he wants rest."

"He gets more rest than he used to get, Edina; I save him all I can. There are some cranky patients who *will* have him, you know."

"I hope it is nothing serious! Do you think he will soon be better?"

Frank touched the horse with the whip: which perhaps made his excuse for not answering. "Had Uncle Hugh been in active condition, I should have left him before this," he observed. "But I want to see him stronger first. He might chance to get some fellow in my place who would not be willing to take most of the work on his shoulders."

"Left him to set up for yourself, do you mean, Frank?"

"To be sure. I ought to, you know," he added with a slight laugh.

She understood the allusion. It was the first time Frank's stolen marriage had been alluded to by either of them, since the day it took place.

"How are you getting on, Frank?" she asked in a low tone, as he drew up outside the station. "You and Daisy?"

"Not getting on at all. She is there, and I am elsewhere. Now and then I see her for five minutes in their garden; but that's pretty nearly stopped now. Until last night, she has been unable to escape from the house for I don't know how long. Of course it is not a lively condition of things."

"It seems to me to be the same thing with you as though you had not been married."

"It is just precisely the same, Edina."

CHAPTER XIV.

LOOKING OUT FOR EDINA.

In the bow-window of the shabby dining-room at Spring Lawn, gazing through it earnestly, stood Major Raynor, his wife, and the children. They were on the tiptoe of expectation, waiting for Edina. A vehicle of some kind could be discerned in the road at a distance; opinions differed, as to whether it was a fly, or not. The evening sunbeams fell athwart the green lawn and on the clustering flowers, whose perfume mingled with that of the hay, lying in cocks in the adjoining field.

"I am sure it *is* a fly," cried little Kate, shading her eyes with her hands, that she might see the better.

"And I tell you it is not," retorted Alfred. "That thing, whatever it is, is coming on at a snail's pace like a waggon. Do you suppose Edina is coming in a waggon, little stupid?"

"I don't think it is a waggon," said Major Raynor, who had the aid of an opera-glass. "It has two horses abreast, at any rate. The driver is whipping them up, too: and see—it is coming along now at a strapping pace. I should say it is a large fly."

Every now and then the vehicle lost itself behind trees and hedges and turnings of the road: from the temporary glimpses they caught, it seemed to them to have something like a cart-load of luggage piled upon its roof. Which was extremely unlikely to belong to Edina.

On it came: its sound now could be heard, though itself was no longer visible. All ears were bent to catch it: and when abreast of the narrow avenue that led to the garden gate it was distinctly heard to turn off the road and rattle down.

"It is a fly," spoke Alice triumphantly. "And it is bringing Edina."

Charles strolled out to the gate to be in readiness. Away tore the children after him, shouting Edina's name in every variety of voice. Major and Mrs. Raynor followed, and were just in time to be at the drawing-up of the vehicle.

It was not a fly. It was a large, lumbering, disreputable conveyance that plied between Bath and some villages daily, and was called Tuppin's van. Disreputable as compared with a genteel, exclusive Bath fly that carried gentlefolks. This was used by only the inferior classes; people who knew nothing about "society."

Nevertheless, Edina was in it. Old Tuppin, throwing the reins across his horses, had left his box to go round to the door; which opened at the back after the manner of an omnibus. A sudden silence had fallen on the children. Edina got out. And Tuppin, touching his hat to Major and Mrs. Raynor, selected her trunk from the luggage on

the roof, and set it down inside the gate. Three male passengers, seated outside in front of the luggage, watched the proceedings.

Edina put a shilling into Tuppin's hand. He thanked her, ascended to his seat, touched his horses, turned them round, and drove up the avenue with a clatter. Edina was smothered with greetings and kisses on the lawn.

"But how could you come in that van, Edina?"

"The carriages at the station were scarce to-day, Charley. The only one I could see wanted to charge me six shillings. This van—but I call it an omnibus—was waiting there for a passenger, and I took advantage of it."

"It is Tuppin's van," persisted Charley. "Nobody ever travels by it, except servants."

"Nobody with a full pocket, perhaps," smiled Edina, with her straightforwardness and her imperturbable good humour. "I paid a shilling only, and came very comfortably."

"There was an old woman inside as well as you, Edina," cried Alfred.

"Yes. It was she who came by the same train that I did, and got out at the station. She is housekeeper, she told me, in some family near here."

Edina caught up little Bobby as she spoke, and the matter dropped. But an impression remained on the minds of the elder children that Edina was more stingy than ever, or she would never have travelled in Tuppin's van when she could have a fly for the hiring. Certainly Edina's ways were saving ways. As contrasted with their own reckless ones, they might appear "stingy." But the time was to come when they would learn how mistaken was the impression, and how entirely they had misjudged her.

"And how you getting on, Uncle Francis?" asked Edina.

"Backwards, my dear. What with no money, so to say, coming in, and everything going out——"

The Major stopped for want of words to express adequately the position. Edina resumed.

"But you have some money coming in, Uncle Francis. You have your income."

"But what is it, my dear, as compared with expenses? Besides, to tell you the truth, it is always forestalled. There always seems to be such a lot to pay."

"How uneasy it must make you!"

"Not a bit of it," spoke the Major cheerily. "With Eagles' Nest to look to in prospective, it does not signify at all. Talking of Eagles' Nest, Edina, have you heard anything of your Aunt Ann lately?"

"We never do hear from her, Uncle Francis. Papa writes to her sometimes, and I write, but we never get an answer."

"I fear she is on her last legs."

The Major spoke solemnly, with quite a rueful expression of countenance. Badly though he wanted the money that his sister's death would bring, and estranged from him though she was, he could not and did not think of it in any spirit but a sad one.

"I have heard from London two or three times lately, Edina, from my lawyer: John Street, you know. And in each letter he has given me a very poor account of Mrs. Atkinson. Her death, poor soul, must be very near."

It had been nearer than the Major, or even his lawyer, anticipated. She was dead. At this very moment, when the Major was talking of her, she was lying dead at Eagles' Nest. Had been dead three or four hours.

News of it reached them in the morning. A letter was delivered at Spring Lawn, and was carried up, as usual, to the Major in bed. Nobody took any particular notice of the letter: as a rule, the Major's letters were but applications from creditors, and could not be supposed to interest the household. Mrs. Raynor was seated at breakfast with her three elder children and Edina, when a sudden bumping on the floor above, and shouts in the Major's voice, startled them considerably.

"Good gracious! he must have fallen out of bed!" cried poor Mrs. Raynor.

"And upset his coffee," added Charley, with a laugh.

But it was nothing of the kind. The Major had jumped up to dress himself in hot haste, and was calling out to them between whiles. He had received news of the death of his sister, Mrs. Atkinson; and was going up forthwith to Eagles' Nest.

"Shall I go too, papa?" asked Charley.

"I don't mind, my boy. I suppose we can scrape up enough money for the tickets."

Of course the children were all in a commotion. Alfred marched up to the nursery, and drew the blinds down.

"What is that for, Master Alfred?" demanded the nurse, who was dressing Kate's doll; Kate herself standing by to watch the process.

"Ah, you don't know," replied Alfred, bursting with impatience to deliver his news, yet withholding it tantalizingly.

"No, I don't," said the nurse, who was often at war with Alfred. "You will have the goodness, sir, to draw the blinds up again, and leave them alone."

"I choose to have them down, nurse."

"You will choose to walk out of my nursery in a minute or two," retorted the nurse. "Wait till I've fixed this frock on. It would be a precious good thing if you were at school, Master Alfred!"

"But I am not going to school," cried Alfred in irrepressible delight,

the good news refusing to be kept down any longer. "I'm going somewhere else. Old Aunt Atkinson's dead, and papa has come into Eagles' Nest and a large fortune, Madam Nurse! And he is going up there to-day; and Charley's going; and we shall go directly. Eagles' Nest! Won't I have a pony to myself!—and a double-barrelled gun!—and a whole shop-full of sweet-stuff!"

Leaping over little Robert, who sat on the floor staring at him, he caught hold of Kate in the exuberance of his anticipations, and whirled her round till she was giddy. Then, attempting a leap across the table, he caught his foot on its edge: boy, table, and a heavy pincushion that was on it, called a "doctor," all came down together. The noise was something wonderful. It brought up Edina and Alice.

"Whatever is it, nurse?"

"Only one of Master Alfred's freaks, ma'am. He thought he would leap over the table."

Alfred was holding his handkerchief to his nose. He would not acknowledge that it bled.

"We thought the house was falling," said Alice. "It was worse than papa. He gave us the first fright."

"And all because he has come into some money, he says, Miss Raynor," put in the nurse, who was angrily picking up the table, "and the money is to buy him everything under the sun."

"Unseemly boasting, Alfred!" cried Edina. "Had you no thought for your poor aunt?"

"I don't see why I should have it, Edina," returned the boy boldly. "I never saw Aunt Atkinson in my life: why should I pretend to put on sorrow for her?"

"I never said you were to, child. Sorrow is real enough, and perhaps, Alfred, you will find that it comes to you often enough in life, without putting it on. But there is a wide gulf between feigning to be sorrowful, and being boisterously elated. As to the fortune, it may not make very much difference to you in any way."

"Oh, won't it though, Edina! Charley's not going to get it all."

"About the blinds, ma'am? Are they to be kept down?"

"I don't know, nurse. I will ask Mrs. Raynor."

"What an old croaker she is!" exclaimed Alfred, as Edina left the room.

"A bit of one," assented Alice.

"That she is not, Miss Alice," said the nurse. "If all of you were only half as good as Miss Edina Raynor!"

When the necessary money for the journey came to be looked after, it was found that the Major and all his household could not scrape it together: though it sounds like a ridiculous fact. Edina came forward with help; and so it was raised.

"I trust it will be all right, Uncle Francis," whispered Edina with

earnest sympathy, as she crossed the lawn with the Major when he wa departing.

"Right in what way, my dear?"

"That you will inherit Eagles' Nest."

"Oh, that *is* all right," replied the Major. "My letter tells me so Everything is willed to me. Poor Ann!—Good-bye, my dear: be sur you stay until we return.—What a hot walk we shall have of it int Bath!" added the Major, taking off his hat and rubbing his brow ir anticipation already. "But there's no help for it; no conveyance o any kind at hand. I'd be glad of Tuppin's van this morning."

Edina stood at the gate, and watched them up the avenue, Charle carrying the black portmanteau. In her steadfast, earnest eyes, there lay a certain expression of *rest*. With her habit of looking forward to the dark side of things as well as the bright, Edina had never felt quite assured upon the point of the Major's inheritance: it was welcome, indeed, to hear that this was placed beyond doubt. What would that improvident, helpless family have done without it!

A hand stole itself within Edina's arm. She turned her soft, dark eyes, to see Mrs. Raynor; who looked, as usual, very mild about the face, and very limp about the dress. The children had rushed indoors again, and were restlessly running from room to room in the excitement of their new prospects, discussing the wonders that would become theirs, now wealth and greatness had fallen to their portion. Their minds were picturing the future residence at Eagles' Nest all gold, and glitter, and gladness: life was to be as one long Lord Mayor's day.

"It is a great strain removed, Edina!"

"What is, Mary?" For Edina had never called this young wife of her uncle's "Aunt." It had been "Mary" from the first. They were not so very many years removed from one another in age.

"All the distress and contriving about money. I have never said much about it, for where was the use: but you don't know what a strain upon the feelings it has been."

"I do," said Edina. "I can only too readily imagine it. For many years the same strain lay on me and papa: at Trennach, and before we went to Trennach. It is removed now in a degree, for the necessity for saving does not exist as it did, but we are careful still. I learnt economical ways in my pinafores, Mary, and shall never forget them. Your children could not understand my coming here in Tuppin's van yesterday, when I might have hired a fly: but it saved five shillings. Papa is given to urge economy upon me still, and to practise it himself. I think he does so for my sake."

"Ah! what *could* you do, Edina, if anything happened to your father, and you were left without the means to live?"

Edina laughed at the consternation expressed in Mrs. Raynor's voice.

To this really helpless woman, the being left without means seemed as the very greatest of all earthly calamities.

"I should have no fear for myself, Mary, I would go out as useful companion; or plain governess; or even as housekeeper. Few places of practical usefulness would come amiss to me."

"That's true, I am sure," said Mrs. Raynor.

They were strolling across the grass-plat arm in arm, Mrs. Raynor stooping to pluck a flower here and there: a June rose; a pink; a morsel of syringa from amid the shrubs.

"How sweet they are, Edina! Take them."

"Sweet, indeed! And I must gather one for myself: a lily-of-the-valley. It is my favourite flower of all flowers."

The lily-of-the-valley picked, they strolled on again. Silence had supervened. Mrs. Raynor was puzzling her brains over the children's mourning: what would, and what would not be necessary, and how it would all get made.

"What are you going to do with Charles?" suddenly asked Edina.

"With Charles! I'm sure I don't know. Why, Edina?"

"It is so sad to see a fine young fellow, as he is, with all his wits and capabilities about him, spending his days in idleness. I had meant to talk to Uncle Francis about it to-day. I do think, Mary, it has been a great mistake."

"Well, dear, perhaps it has," replied the equable woman. "But you see, it takes so much money to bring young men on in life: and we had no money to spare."

"Then, where money lacks, they should be 'brought on' in some way that does not take money," rejoined Edina. "Charles has been absolutely idle; and only from the want of being directed to be otherwise. Even Frank saw the error. When he returned to us the last time from his short stay here, he said what a pity it was."

"Charles wanted to be a barrister, I fancy. But the Major could not take any steps in it without money."

"Do you know what I should have done, Mary—placed him in a lawyer's office as a temporary clerk, that he might be acquiring some knowledge of law while he was waiting."

"I declare we never thought of that," cried Mrs. Raynor. "Perhaps Charley would not have liked it, though."

"Perhaps not. I should have done it, for all that, had I been Uncle Francis. Nothing in the world is so pernicious to a young man as the acquiring of idle habits. Has Charles been reading law books?"

"No; only novels," said Mrs. Raynor.

"And yet the other might have been of great use to him! It has been just so much precious time wasted, Mary. These opening years of manhood are the best years in a young man's life. I mean as regards the acquirement of knowledge. The faculties are all awake,

and thirsting for it. Later, they get somewhat dulled, and the thirst diminishes."

"Well, it will all be right, Edina, now that he has Eagles' Nest to look forward to. Of course, he could look forward to it before; but the doubt was, when we should come into it. Suppose Mrs. Atkinson had lived to be a hundred years old? Some people do. Where should we all have been then?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said Edina, smiling. "Suppose Uncle Francis should live to be a hundred, Mary? Where would Charley be in that case?"

"But, Edina, what would it matter? With a beautiful place like Eagles' Nest, and means to keep it up, the children would always be sure of a home and welcome there. It would be Charley's as much as ours. He ——"

"Oh, mamma! Oh, Edina! What do you think? Papa has gone without his shaving tackle, and without his boots!"

The salutation came from the children; all of them wildly rushing forth again to shout it out. They had been visiting the Major's dressing-room, and discovered that these indispensable articles had been left behind.

"They are his light summer boots, too; those with the long name," said Alice. "He cannot walk about much in any others."

"Dear, dear, dear!" lamented Mrs. Raynor. "He must have put on those tight, patched ones by mistake—and they always blister his heels. How will he be able to get to Bath?"

Eagles' Nest was not large, but it was one of the prettiest places in all Kent. A long, low, ancient house of grey stone, covered in places with ivy. Some of its old-fashioned casements, with their small panes, had been replaced (many people said spoilt) by modern windows of plate-glass, opening to terraces, to undulating lawns, and to beds of brilliant-hued flowers. Few old houses have so gay and cheerful an appearance as this house had: perhaps owing to the large windows and to other improvements. The entrance door stood in the middle, and was approached by three or four broad, low steps. Painted casements of rich and blended colours—blue, pink, violet, amethyst, and gold—threw their lovely tints upon the tesselated pavement of the hall. Rooms opened on either side of it; bright, attractive rooms, that had a very *home* look, in spite of their beauty, with the large windows that let in the joyous sunlight, and outside Venetian blinds to draw down at will. It was altogether a compact, cheery, and most desirable residence; and it was at an easy and convenient distance by rail from London. The estate, in regard to its land, had been well kept up by Mrs. Atkinson. It was worth about two thousand a year; but was capable of improvement.

When Major Raynor and his son arrived there in the course of the afternoon, the Major in some torment touching his heels and his boots, they were received by Mr. Street, the solicitor to the late Mrs. Atkinson. He was brother to Mr. Edwin Street, the acting partner in the Atkinson bank. John Street was the elder of the brothers: a man of sixty now, who was well known in London as a quiet and most respectable practitioner. He was reserved in his manners; not at all what could be called "genial," and rather severe than benevolent; strictly just, but perhaps not generous.

As the fly that brought the Major and his son from the nearest station rattled up, Mr. Street appeared at the hall door: a little man in spectacles, with cold light eyes and very scanty hair.

"I am glad you are come, Major Raynor."

"And I'm sure I'm glad to see that you are," returned the Major, cordially holding out his hand. "I might have found myself in a fog without you. I got your letter this morning."

"We received news of Mrs. Atkinson's death yesterday afternoon; her coachman was sent up to us with the tidings, and I wrote to you at once," observed Mr. Street. "As you are the sole inheritor, save for a few trifling legacies, and also the executor, I thought it well, as I stated in my letter, that you should be here."

"Just so," said the Major. "When did you get here yourself?"

"I came down this morning."

"And I and Charley started off in a scuffle to catch the ten o'clock train—and I came away in my wrong boots, and—and Charley has been laughing at me. You don't know him, Street—my eldest son and heir. Charley, come here, sir, and be introduced to Mr. Street."

Charles Raynor had been looking from the open window. He had never seen so pretty a place before as this one, lying under the June sunshine. Hay was being made here, just as it had been in Somerset; and the sweet fresh smell came wafted to him on the summer breeze. The lawns were beautifully kept, the flowers were choice; shrubs clustered around, trees waved above. In the distance was spread out a beautiful landscape, than which nothing could have been more pleasing to the eye. Close by, curled the blue smoke from the little village of Grassmere, hidden by the trees from the view of its grand neighbour, Eagles' Nest. Surely in this spot man could find all his heart desired! Charley sighed as he turned in obedience to the call: the lad had a love for the beauties of nature.

"Had this been left to others instead of ourselves, how I should envy them, now that I have seen it!" said Charles to himself. And he was not thinking then of any pecuniary benefit.

Mr. Street looked keenly at him as he turned. He saw a tall, slender, good-looking young man; who, in manner at least, appeared to be somewhat indifferent, not to say haughty.

"A proud young dandy, who thinks the world's made for him," decided the lawyer in his inmost mind.

"In any profession, young sir?" asked Mr. Street.

"Not yet," replied Charles. "I shall have, I expect, to go to college before thinking of one. If I think of one at all."

"Better enter one," said Mr. Street, shortly. "There's no life so pleasant as one that has its regular occupation; none so miserable as one of idleness."

"And that's true," put in the Major. "Since I left the service, I've been like a fish out of water. Sometimes, before the day has well begun I wish it was ended, not knowing what to do with myself."

"Not many weeks ago, Mrs. Atkinson was talking to me about that very thing, Major. She fancied you would have done better not to sell out."

"Ay; I've said so myself. Poor Ann! Poor Ann! I should like to have seen more of her. But she had her crotchets, you know, Street. Did she suffer much at the last, I wonder?"

"No, she went off quite easily, like one who was worn out. She is lying in the red room: I've been up to see her. A good woman; but, as you observe, Major, crotchety on some points."

"Why, would you believe it, Street, she once thought of disinheriting me."

"I know it," replied the lawyer. "And, perhaps," he added, with as much of a smile as ever came near his lips, "you owe it to me that she did not do it."

"Indeed! How was that?"

"I received a letter from her, calling me down here, for the purpose, she said, of altering her will. Away I came, bringing the will with me—for I held one copy of it, as you may remember, Major Raynor, and you the other. 'I want to disinherit my brother,' were the first words she said to me; 'I shall leave Eagles' Nest to George Atkinson: I always wished him to have it.' Of course I asked her the why and the wherefore. 'Francis has affronted me, and he shall not inherit it,' was all the explanation I could get from her. Well, Major, I talked to her, and brought her into a more reasonable frame of mind: and the result was, that I carried the original will back to town with me, untouched and unaltered."

"Poor Ann! poor Ann!" repeated the Major.

"About the arrangements?" resumed Mr. Street. "If I can be of any use to you, Major ——"

"Why, you can be of all the use," interrupted the Major. "I don't know a bit how to manage anything."

Mr. Street had brought the will down with him to-day, and it was deemed right to open it at once. Major Raynor found that the recollection he had retained of its general contents was pretty accurate,

save on one point. Eagles' Nest was left to him as it stood, with all its contents and appurtenances; and he was made residuary legatee: therefore, whatever moneys might have accumulated or been invested in shares, stock, and what not, would become his, after all claims and legacies were paid. The one point on which his memory had not served him, regarded the bequest to Frank Raynor. Instead of its being "among the thousands," as he had confidently believed, and led Frank to believe, it was only among the hundreds. And not very high in them, either. Five hundred pounds. That was its amount: neither more nor less. The Major looked at the amount ruefully.

"I'm sure I can't tell how I came to take up the notion that it was so much more, Charley," said he. "I am very sorry. It will be a disappointment for Frank."

"But can't you make it up to him, father?" suggested Charles. "There must be a great deal of accumulated money, as Mr. Street says: you might spare Frank a little out of it."

"Why, to be sure I can," heartily returned the Major, his eyes beaming. "It did not strike me. But I should have thought of it myself, Charley, later."

"A great deal of accumulated money, regarding it from a moderate point of view," spoke the lawyer, in confirmation. "Mr. Timothy Atkinson left a fairish sum behind him, the interest upon which must have been accumulating until now. And his widow did not, I am sure, live up to anything like the revenues of this estate."

"What is it all invested in?—where's it lying?" asked the Major.

"We must see to that."

"But don't you know?"

"No. Mrs. Atkinson managed her monetary affairs herself, without reference to me. My brother knows all about everything, I daresay; but he is, and always has been, as close as wax."

"Perhaps the money is deposited with him?"

"I think not," said the lawyer. "I know he once, close though he is, said something to the effect that it was not. The securities for it, bonds and vouchers, and so forth, are no doubt lying in his hands."

The funeral took place, Mr. Street again coming down for the ceremony. He was accompanied by his brother, Mr. Edwin Street. Dr. Raynor had declined the invitation sent him: he was not well enough to undertake the long journey; and Frank could not be spared.

Some conversation occurred between the brothers, on the way down, about the above-mentioned securities; but the banker at once said they were not deposited with him. In the after part of the day, when the funeral was over, Lawyer Street mentioned this to Major Raynor, and said they were no doubt "somewhere in the house."

A thorough search ensued: old Mrs. Atkinson's maid, an elderly and

partially confidential attendant of many years, taking part in it. She showed them every possible place of security, locked and unlocked, in which such deeds could be placed. But none were found.

"I still think they must be in your strong boxes at the bank," observed the lawyer to his brother, as he and Major Raynor returned to the room where they had left Mr. Edwin Street and Charles.

"But I assure you they are not," replied the banker, who bore a good deal of resemblance to his brother, and had the same cold manner. "When Mrs. Atkinson made her will, she lodged with us certain bonds of India Stock, just about sufficient to pay the legacies she bequeathed in that will when the time should come—as it now has come. She told me that she intended the stock to be applied to that purpose. We hold the bonds still; and the interest, which we have regularly received for her, has been added to her current account with us: but we hold no other securities."

"What an odd thing!" cried the Major. "Where can they be?"

"When our second partner, Mr. Timothy Atkinson, died," continued the banker, "he left a certain sum in the bank to his wife's account, upon which she was to receive substantial interest. But in about a year, I think it was, she withdrew this sum, and invested it elsewhere."

"Where? What in?"

"I cannot tell. I never knew. I understood from her that it was invested; but I knew no more. We have never had any money of hers since—except of course the current account, paid in from the revenues of this estate. And we hold no securities of hers, besides these that I have spoken of, the Indian bonds."

"Was the sum she withdrew a large one?" asked the Major.

"It was between fourteen and fifteen thousand pounds."

"And she must have added ever so much on to that," observed the lawyer. "She has not lodged her superfluous income with you?" he added to his brother.

"No. I have said so. We hold nothing but her current account. That has been replenished by her when necessary; but we have had nothing more. It is certainly strange where the vouchers for her property can be. I suppose," added the banker more slowly, "that she did not invest the money in some bubble scheme, and lose it?"

"The very same thought was crossing my mind," spoke his brother.

"But, you don't think that probable, do you, Street?" cried Major Raynor, turning rather hot.

A pause ensued. Lawyer Street was evidently thinking the probabilities out. They waited, and watched him.

"I must confess that circumstances look suspicious," he said at length. "Else why so much secrecy?"

"Secrecy?"

"Yes. If Mrs. Atkinson placed the money in any well-known safe

investment, why was she not open about it: get me to act for her, and lodge the securities at the bank? She did neither: she acted for herself—as we must suppose—and kept the transaction to herself. The inference is, that it was some wild-goose venture that she did not care to speak of. Women are *so* credulous."

"What a gloomy look out!" put in the Major.

"Oh, well, we have only been glancing at possibilities, you know," observed Mr. Street. "I daresay the securities will be found—and the money also."

"Right, John," assented the banker. "Had Mrs. Atkinson found her money was being lost, she would assuredly have set you to work to recover it. I think we may safely assume that much, Major Raynor?"

CHAPTER XV.

UNEXPECTED COMMOTION.

"Be sure you stay until we return," had been the charge left to Edina Raynor by her uncle. But the Major found himself detained longer than he had thought for, and she went away from Spring Lawn without again seeing him or Charles.

During the short period of her absence from Trennach—nine days—her father had changed so much that she started inwardly when she saw him. As he came out of his house to welcome her, all Edina's pulses stood still for a moment, and then coursed onwards with a bound. In a gradual, wasting illness, not very apparent to the eyes around, it is only on such an occasion as this that its inroads can be judged of.

"Papa, you have been ill!"

"True, Edina. But I am mending somewhat now."

"Why did you not send for me?"

"Nay, my dear, there was not any necessity."

A substantial tea-table had been spread, and in a very few minutes Edina was presiding at it; her travelling things off, her soft brown hair smoothed, her countenance wearing its usual cheerful gravity. Not a gravity that repelled: one that insensibly attracted, for it spoke of its owner's truth, and faith, and earnestness, of her goodwill to all about her. Sitting there, dispensing her cups of tea to the Doctor and Frank, she was ready to hear the news of all that had transpired in the village during her absence.

Nearly the first item that greeted her was the stir about Josiah Bell—of which she had previously heard nothing. It had not subsided in the least, but rather increased: the man missing so long was now supposed to be lying in the deep shaft. But supposition could only be traced back to a very insecure source indeed: nothing more than a dream of Mr. Blase Pellet's.

"A dream!" exclaimed Edina, in the midst of her listening wonder.

"So Pellet says," replied Dr. Raynor.

"But, papa, can there be any foundation for it? I mean the fact: not the dream?"

"The very question that we all asked when the rumour arose, Edina. At first it could not be traced to any source at all: there was the report, but whence it came seemed to be a mystery. One said, You told me; the other said, No, I heard it from you. At last, by dint of some close and patient investigation, chiefly on the part of the publican, Float, it was traced back to Blase Pellet. And he said he dreamt it."

"Then, after all, it has no foundation," cried Edina.

"None but that. I questioned Pellet myself: asking him how he came to spread such a report. He replied that he did not spread the report that Bell was lying there, only that he dreamt he was."

"I should have thought Blase Pellet a very unlikely man to have dreams, papa."

"So should I," assented the Doctor in a significant tone. "So unlikely, that I cannot help suspecting he did not have this one."

Frank Raynor, who had risen to stand at the window, as if attracted by something in the street, turned his head half round at this remark, but immediately turned it back again. Edina looked inquiringly at her father.

"I could not help fancying, as I listened to him, that Pellet was saying it for some purpose," observed the Doctor. "His manner was peculiar. If I may so describe it—shuffling."

"I scarcely understand you, papa. You think he did not have the dream? That he only said he had it; and said it for a purpose?"

"Just so, Edina."

"But what could be his purpose?"

"Ah, there I am at fault. We may discover later. If he did say it with a purpose, I conclude it will not end here."

"Well, it sounds rather strange altogether," observed Edina. "Frank, do you mean to let your tea get quite cold?"

Frank Raynor returned to his place at the table. He drank his tea, but declined to eat; and began to speak of Mrs. Atkinson's will.

"Did you hear any particulars about it, Edina?"

"No," replied Edina. "Except the one fact that she did not make a second will. There were doubts upon the point, you know."

"Uncle Francis never entertained any doubt of it, Edina. And he was the best judge, I think, of what his sister would, or would not do. I am very glad though, for his and Charley's sake."

"For all their sakes," added Edina.

"I rather wonder we have not heard from him," resumed Frank. "The funeral took place three or four days ago."

"You were not able to go to it, papa?" said Edina.

"No, child. Neither could Frank be spared. It would have taken three days, you see, to go and return comfortably."

Rising from the tea table as soon as he could make a decent excuse for it, for he had no business calls on his time this evening, Frank set off on his usual walk to the Mount. Five evenings, since Edina left, had he so gone; but never with any success: not once had Daisy come out to him. She was being watched closer than ever.

"And I suppose I shall have my walk for nothing this evening also!" thought Frank, as he plucked a wild rose from one of the fragrant roadside hedges. "This shall not go on long: but I should like to present myself to Mrs. St. Clare with an assured sum in hand to start us in life. I wonder Uncle Francis does not write! He must know I am anxious —if he thinks about it. Up to his ears in his new interests, he forgets other people's."

Fortune favoured Frank this evening. As he approached the outer gate of the Mount, he saw Daisy standing at it, very much to his surprise.

"Mamma's lawyer has come over on business, and she is shut up with him," began Daisy, her eyes dancing with delight. "She told me to go to Lydia. But Lydia is asleep, and I came out here."

"I have wanted to see you so much, Daisy," said Frank, as he gave her his arm, and they turned off under the broad elm trees. "My aunt, Mrs. Atkinson, is dead."

"We saw it in the papers," answered Daisy.

"It is from her that I expect money, you know. Every day I look for a letter from my Uncle Frank, telling me what sum it is that I inherit. And then I shall present myself to your mother. I have so longed to tell you this."

"I have longed to see you," returned Daisy, her pulses beating wildly with various and very mixed feelings, her face flushing and paling. "I—I—I want to ask you something, Frank."

"Ask away, my love," was his reply. But he noticed her emotion.

"Perhaps you will not answer me?"

"Indeed I will, Daisy. Why not?"

"It is about—Rosaline Bell." She could scarcely get the words out for agitation.

Frank was startled. It was quite evident that he was unprepared for any such topic. It seemed to *frighten* him. Else why that sudden change of countenance, that sudden drop of Daisy's arm? Her heart fell.

"What of her?" asked Frank, quite sharply. For in truth he believed Daisy was about to question him, not of Rosaline herself, but of that mysterious rumour connected with her father and the Bottomless Shaft; and it grated on him terribly.

"I see it is true," gasped Daisy. "Oh! why did you marry *me?*"

"What is true?" returned Frank, unpleasantly agitated.

"That you—that you—were fond of Rosaline Bell. You loved her all along. Before you loved me!"

The charge was so very different from what he had been fearing, that Frank felt for the moment bewildered: bewildered in the midst of his inexpressible relief. He stood still, turned Daisy so that she faced him, and gazed into her eyes.

"*What* is it that you say, my dear? I don't understand."

Daisy shook and shivered, but did not speak.

"That I love Rosaline Bell? I never loved her. What in the world put such an idea in your head?"

For answer Daisy burst into tears. "She—she was so beautiful!"

"Beautiful! Of course she is beautiful. And I admired her beauty, Daisy, if it comes to that, as much as other people did. But as to loving Rosaline Bell, that is a mistake. I never felt a spark of love for her. What a goose you must be, Daisy!—And why on earth should you have taken up the fancy just now?"

Daisy sobbed too much to answer. She nearly believed what he said, for no doubt lay in his earnest tone, and suffered herself to be soothed. She would have quite believed it, but for Frank's signs of discomfiture at the introduction of the girl's name. Frank held her to him as they walked underneath the trees, and kissed her tear-stained face from time to time.

"You need not doubt my love, Daisy. That at least is yours."

They parted more hopefully than usual, for Frank assured her it could not be above a day or two ere he claimed her openly; and Daisy felt that she might believe him in all respects; and she resolutely flung aside her jealousy.

"Fare you well, my darling. A short while now—we may count it by the hours—and all this will be over."

He went home by way of the Bare Plain. And by so doing—and it was not very often now he chose that route—fell into an adventure he had not bargained for. Round and about the Bottomless Shaft had collected a crowd of men, who were making much commotion.

It appeared that the rumours, touching Josiah Bell, had this night reached what might be called a climax. Miners had gone off from various quarters to the alleged scene of Mr. Blase's dream, and were plunging into the mystery con amore. As many as could press around the pit's mouth were holding on to one another for safety and hanging dangerously over it: as if by that means they could solve the problem of who and what might be lying within. Others stood at a distance, making free comments, momentarily taking their pipes out of mouth to speak. Mrs. Bell, getting to hear of the stir, had tied a white-spotted yellow silk square (once Josiah's Sunday-going handkerchief) over her cap, and come out to make one of the throng. It was a very light and hot night, daylight scarcely gone, and the western sky bright

with a pale amber. The rugged faces of the miners and the red glow from their pipes, coupled with the commotion that stirred them, made a strange scene.

"Are you here, Mrs. Bell!" cried Frank, as he discerned her on the outskirts of the crowd. "What is it that is the matter?"

"There's nothing the matter," interposed Blase Pellet. And Frank turned on his heel to face the speaker in the moment's impulse, for he had not known that he was there. "What the plague all the town has come out for like this, I can't think. Let them mind their own business."

"But we consider that it is our business, don't you see, Blase," put in Andrew Float in his civil way. "Our poor vanished mate is either lying down there in they stones and ashes, or he isn't; and we'd like to make sure which it were."

"Well, then, he is *not*," returned Blase: and he disappeared amid the throng.

"Has anything fresh arisen?" inquired a quiet voice at this juncture —that of Dr. Raynor—addressing both Frank and Mrs. Bell, who were standing side by side. The Doctor, observing from his window a great number of people, evidently in excitement, making for the Bare Plain, had come forth himself to learn what the movement meant.

"I can't find out that there's anything fresh, sir," was the dame's answer. "Amid such confusion one don't easily get to the bottom of things. Andrew Float says 'twas just a thought that took 'em as they sat over their cups at the Golden Shaft—that they'd come off and have a look down the pit's mouth; and others, seeing them, followed. But I'd hardly think anything so simple could have brought all these."

"They must have had some reason for coming," remarked the Doctor, gazing at the ever-increasing crowd.

"Blase Pellet has just said there is no reason," rejoined Frank. "I should advise you not to stand out here long," he added, to Mrs. Bell.

"Blase Pellet's nobody to go by: he'll say one thing to-day, and another to-morrow," hastily rejoined Dame Bell; as she turned on the path that led to her home; they turning with her.

"I think the dreams, that he says he has, are not much to go by," observed Dr. Raynor quietly.

"Oh, but that dream was," said Dame Bell. "And I've never had a good night's rest, sir, since I heard it, and that's more than a week ago. I can't get to sleep at night for thinking of it."

"I am sorry to hear you say so, Mrs. Bell: I thought you had better sense. Pellet must have been very foolish to tell you of it."

"'Twasn't him that did tell me, Dr. Raynor. Leastways, not off-hand. It was Nancy Tomson. She come into my place one morning when I was down on my knees after breakfast whitening the hearth-flag; and I saw how scared her face looked, sir. 'Guess what they

be saying now,' says she to me: 'they've got a tale that your husband is a lying in the Bottomless Shaft.' Well, sir, I stared at her, sitting back, as I knelt, with the piece of stone in my hand: for you see I thought she meant he was lying there asleep; I thought no worse. 'Go along with you, Nancy,' says I; 'as if Bell would lie himself down to sleep near that shaft!' 'Oh, it's not near it, but *in* it,' says she 'and it's not sleeping he is, but dead. Anyway,' she goes on, seeing I didn't believe her, 'it's what they men be saying.' Well, Doctor though I found every soul in the place saying the same thing, for four-and-twenty hours I could not get to learn why they said it. Andrew Float told me at last. He said it was through a dream of Blase Pellet's."

Dr. Raynor, listening attentively, made no comment.

"I got Pellet before me, sir, and he made a clean breast of it. He had not intended to let me know it, he said—and I don't think he had.: but I did know it, and so it was no use his holding out. It was a dreadful dream, he said. He had seen my poor husband lying at the bottom of that deep shaft, dead: seen him as plain as he had ever seen anything in all his life. When he woke up, he was all in a hot horror, his hair standing on end."

"Ah," said the Doctor quietly, his tone one of utter disbelief, though Mrs. Bell did not detect it. "Did he intimate, pray, how long Bell had been lying there?"

"It was what I asked him, sir, when I could get my breath together. A good three months, he was sure, he said: which must have brought it back, sir, you see to the time he disappeared."

"Yes, I do see," observed the Doctor, rather pointedly. "Well, I put no faith in dreams, Mrs. Bell, and I would advise you to put none. Good night. Get indoors as soon as you can."

Dr. Raynor turned homewards, making a circuit to avoid the throng. Frank began whistling softly to himself, as a man sometimes does when absorbed in thought.

"What is your opinion of this, Frank?" asked the Doctor, abruptly.

"I can form none, sir. Why they should collect ——"

"Not that," interrupted the Doctor. "One fool makes many. I spoke of Blase Pellet's alleged dream. I, myself, believe he had nothing of the kind: but what puzzles me is, his motive for saying that he had. Some men are gifted with a propensity for astounding their fellow-creatures with marvellous tales. To create a sensation they'd say they have been hung, drawn, quartered, and brought to life again. But Pellet is not one of these: he is quiet, reticent, and practical."

Frank made no answering observation. They were nearly abreast now of the Bottomless Shaft, and of the crowd surging around it.

"I could almost think that he *knows* Bell is in there," resumed the Doctor, dropping his voice. "That he must have been privy to the

accident—if it was an accident—that sent poor Bell down. Perhaps took part in it —— "

"Oh, no, no! It is not likely he would take part in anything of the kind, Uncle Hugh."

"If I don't quite think it, it is because there are one or two stumbling-blocks in the way," went on Dr. Raynor with composure, and paying no heed to the interruption. "Had Pellet been a witness to any accident—any false slip of Bell's, for instance, on the edge of the pit—he would have spoken of it at the time. Had he taken any part in it—inadvertently, say, for I don't think Pellet would do so willingly—and hushed it up, he would not be likely to invent a dream now, and so draw attention again to what had nearly died away. Nevertheless, I am sure there is something or other in this new stir of Mr. Pellet's that does not appear on the surface."

Dr. Raynor quitted the subject, to the intense relief of his nephew; took off his hat in the warm night, and began to talk of the evening star, shining before them in all its brilliancy.

"A little while, Frank, a few more poor weeks, or months, or years, given to the fret and tare of this earthly life, and we shall, I suppose, know what these stars are; shall have entered on our heavenly life hereafter."

Major Raynor's expected letter came to Frank on the following morning. As he opened it, a bank-note for £20 dropped out: which the generous-hearted Major had sent as an earnest of his goodwill.

"My Dear Boy,—I am sorry to have to tell you that the legacy left you by your Aunt Ann is only five hundred pounds. I confess that I thought it would have turned out to be at least three thousand. Of course I shall make it up to you. We cannot yet put our hands upon the securities for the accumulated money; but as soon as we do so, you shall have a cheque from me for three thousand pounds.

"I hope my brother is better, and Edina well. I wish she could be at Spring Lawn to help in the packing up, and all the rest of it. They come up to Eagles' Nest next week: and how they will get away without Edina to start them, I cannot think. My best affection to all.

"Ever your attached uncle,

"Francis Raynor."

"I wonder how it is," mused Frank, as he slowly folded the letter, "that in all our needs and necessities and troubles, we instinctively turn to Edina?"

(*To be continued.*)

PRINCESS ELEANOR.

I.

MUNICH, September, 186—.

MY dear Geoffrey,—When we rambled together through Italy from the snow of the Alps and the fires of Mount Vesuvius to the iceborn waters of the Po, you often joked me on my shyness and reserve, and declared me incapable of appreciating female loveliness. For not the fiery eyes of the Venetian; not the thinly veiled snowy neck of the fair daughters of Milan; not even the proud profile of the Roman, could allure your bashful friend. While you, like a butterfly, flitted from flower to flower, I had eyes only for the forms of beauty of ages long past.

Oh, Geoffrey, how changed is all this! My hour has come at last—the ideal of my soul has appeared to me.

But hear it all from the beginning. I had spent more than a week in the halls of the Crystal Palace at Munich, visiting the collection of fine arts there exhibited: happy in admiring the best productions of nearly half a century. With one lingering look I was taking leave of Schwind's "Seven Ravens," when suddenly I was interrupted in my contemplation by a voice, expressing admiration of the rare piece of art before me. I looked up and perceived a young lady, standing by the side of a gentleman in the full vigour of manhood. So melodious had that voice sounded, that I remained rooted to the spot, apparently intent on the picture, until she should turn her whole face towards me. Geoffrey, I cannot tell you how those features moved all the innermost fibres of my heart! Dark blue eyes full of soul, a pure high forehead, a noble mouth, the beauty of her person such as leads one to imagine that so much loveliness can only be mated with all perfection of mind and heart; a figure rare in its proportions, every attitude a Venus of Milo.

Call me an enthusiast if you like, but I must confess that this thought struck me: This will be my death, if it be not vouchsafed to me to share her lot! And as yet I knew not whether her companion were father, brother or husband! The fear of losing her without a trace to find her again, made me forgetful of good manners and discretion. I drew out my pocket-book, and with a few hasty lines sketched her portrait, impressing every feature in my memory, so as to be able to render it again. How inadequately does my pencil reproduce such beauty! It happened, as I had feared. While a friend was detaining me, the strangers left the room, and by the time I had wound myself through the crowd at the door, their carriage had taken them beyond reach.

For a whole week I stood sentinel at the Exhibition ; but they never came again. I visited the theatres every evening, inquired at every hotel, walked from the galleries to the studios of Kaulbach and Piloty—all in vain. I saw her no more. But her image is graven for ever in my heart. Hear what I have decided upon.

I must paint a great work of art, for the model of which I shall draw upon my memory, and the sketch I have made ; and with the aid of this picture I must find her again, even should I be obliged to exhibit it in every capital of Europe.

Good-bye, Geoffrey. Think sometimes of the miseries of

Your friend, WALTER.

II.

My dear Geoffrey,—Victory ! My plan has been successful ! I have found her again—she is still free !

But with all that I am the unhappiest of mortals !

Listen, Geoffrey, and pity me, for I am beyond help or advice.

It is now a full year since I first saw her, and not for one day has her image faded from my heart. During the winter I completed my picture. It is painted with all the ardour of my soul, in the highest flight of my fancy, with the whole passion of my nature, with the minute care of a lover, and—I may say it—it is the best I have ever done.

I have painted her in the character of "Snowdrop." Ever since last Easter the picture has been exhibited, first at Munich, then at Dresden, Berlin, Frankfort. The resemblance is, if I can judge aright, quite striking, and therefore had I hoped that the object of all my yearning would recognise herself, or that some friend of hers would question me as to its identity. I watched like an Argus, from morning till night, killing time with making copies and pencil sketches. More than thirty persons had applied for the purchase of my picture, but of course I refused every offer.

At last I sent the "Snowdrop" to the Rhenish Art Exhibition, and accompanied it to Cologne. One day as I was sitting in a window recess, with a pencil, drawing on my knees, I heard a manly voice asking one of the attendants for the inspector.

"He has gone out, Sir."

"Then possibly you can tell me where the picture is that lately excited so much the admiration of her Majesty?"

"Perhaps you mean the 'Snowdrop'? It is close by."

"Pray show it to us, my good man." I heard steps and the rustling of a lady's dress, and after a while the same voice, said :

"The Queen is right. It is, indeed, a remarkable resemblance. How strange ! Do you know, my good fellow, whether the picture is sold or not?"

"It is not sold, but the artist does not wish to sell it; I believe he is an eccentric person. He has already refused the handsomest offers."

"Can you give me his address?"

"He spends most of his time here—Oh, there he is!"

That exclamation brought me to my feet. The next instant I stood before them, but speechless. Once more I beheld the object of all my hopes and wishes, on the arm of the same gentleman in whose company I had first seen her at Munich.

The man, who after long imprisonment is for the first time taken into the light of the sun, may feel as I did at that moment.

My whole soul seemed to be passing out at my eyes; I felt like another being.

The stranger broke silence by saying:

"I am happy to know the author of this splendid work of art. I have a great wish to purchase it."

"I am sorry," I stammered, after a pause, "but I do not intend to sell it."

"Do you know, my dear Sir, that I shall not let you off so easily. I find a resemblance in the picture, which does not seem to rest on mere chance. If you refuse me an explanation you will not find it easy to refuse it my sister. I leave you to fix your own terms."

"Pray, do!" I heard the melodious voice say, whose tones never fail to reach my heart. Still I stood firm.

"Will not a copy suffice?" I asked.

"No. But that suggests an alternative to me. Who may have served as model for this picture, I know not; but choose a similar subject to this, and my sister will sit for it. We pass the winter in Berlin, and it would suit us best if you could set to work there. All the conditions I leave you to determine."

"I should consider it a great honour," I replied, scarcely knowing what I said.

"Then we are agreed. Towards the end of autumn you will find us in Berlin. Here is my card."

Whilst the speaker was taking his card out, I tried to say a few words to the lady, but something about her, at once gentle and proud, rendered me so timid that I could not for all the world have found the right thing to utter. By the time I had stammered some incomprehensible words, the gentleman had put his card into my hand, and bowing, left the room with his companion. I stood looking after them with open mouth, until my eye caught the card in my hand.

I read the inscription, and in my terror let it fall to the ground. This was the name it bore—

Ernest, Prince Waldemberg.

Farewell, golden dream of love! Farewell, Geoffrey! Either you

will hear no word of me for a long time, or you will soon clasp me bodily to your heart.

Shall I keep my rashly given promise? Yours, WALTER.

III.

Dearest Amelia,—Have you already condemned me beyond mercy, or am yet I in time to plead my own cause?

What on earth could have made me promise to write every evening? If I try to describe a single day, you will say that for once breaking your word is no crime.

At nine we breakfast; after which Ernest goes regularly to the Reichstag, and I get ready for my masters. Singing, music, languages, fill up the morning. After lunch, I accompany my brother to studios and galleries; sometimes we pay visits or take a drive; I scarcely find time to dress for dinner. After dinner we either see a few friends at home, or else go to a theatre, a concert, or some small party. Balls have not as yet begun. When at last we return, Ernest expects me to play to him; he is kind enough to call that his recreation; and so it is usually very late indeed before I can get back to my own room. Were I then to write letters they would only be dreary epistles, as unpleasant to you to read as the writer to pen. I shall have plenty of time to tell you all when I return to Heiligen Stein next summer, where I should heartily wish I were now if I did not know that Ernest is happy to have me with him. But I will write you all important news, and if to-day's post is but a poor one, do not fear; there will be plenty of subjects to enlarge upon by-and-by.

One piece of news I must not forget to tell you: your wish to have my portrait will be fulfilled. Listen in how wonderful a way.

A short time ago we were told that in the Rhenish Exhibition there was a picture, a masterpiece of modern art, which so much resembled me, that even the queen herself thought it was a portrait of me. I went with Ernest to see it, although he thought what had been said a fable. He thinks with you, that Eleanor has not her equal in all the world. But there, the picture was Eleanor, Princess Waldemberg, in real life, perhaps a little idealized, attired in the simple dress of a "snowdrop!"

I am not sure whether Ernest was more vexed or delighted. He inquired for the artist, intending to buy the beautiful picture.

A young man was pointed out to us, who happened to be in the gallery; a tall, fair, handsome, blue-eyed youth, with that dreamy expression of countenance which we fancy peculiar to artists. His decided refusal to let us have the picture disclosed, however, firmness of character. The resemblance he did not choose to explain. Either he cleverly pretended not to know what Ernest meant, when he

alluded to it, or else he did not understand him. He has something peculiarly shy and reserved about him.

It is not Ernest's way to give up a thing he has set his mind upon. When he saw that the young man would on no account part with his picture, he proposed that he should paint another, taking me for his model. To this the artist agreed, and we told him that he would shortly find us at Berlin.

Perhaps I should have forgotten the whole affair had not Ernest continually spoken of it, and even insisted upon my having a dress made, similar to the one worn by the Snowdrop of the picture.

Yesterday the artist came for the first time, and I found that his name is Walter Impach. He must have moved little in society, for his embarrassed manner reminds me of the sensitive plant in your conservatory, that shrinks as soon as it is touched.

After some conversation, Ernest took Herr Impach over the house to enable him to choose a room for his studio. Last of all we visited the gallery, where the artist went into ecstasies over our collection, and called the Rembrandts "quite invaluable"! You know how fond Ernest is of his pictures, and can fancy that the young man thus drew himself into favour without knowing it.

I was told to show my dress, which the artist approved of. Then he left us, promising to come next day, at the hour Ernest had appointed. When we were alone my brother and I continued to speak of Herr Impach for some time. Ernest said that he was much too modest for an artist, and had he not seen the picture he should have fancied Herr Impach to be but a beginner. I could not understand Ernest's meaning, for was it not natural that the artist who for the first time in his life entered a house like ours, should feel shy, especially in Ernest's somewhat imposing presence? But my brother said: "An artist of genius thinks himself *every one's* equal!"

This morning the first sitting. When I entered the studio—it is thus we call the small room Herr Impach has chosen for his work—all was ready. A strong scent of turpentine pervaded the apartment. As I appeared at the door in my white dress, Mr. Impach started up from his seat, and stared me full in the face. No bow, no "good morning;" all that came a good while after.

I sat down; but now began the real trouble. After a few strokes on the canvas, Mr. Impach declared that my hair was not at all suitable. That to me! I had a looking-glass brought, and destroyed all Fanny's elaborate work. But to please this child of art was more than I was able. At last I exclaimed impatiently: "Arrange it yourself, then!" Scarcely had I said the words, when a thought of the strange hand that would touch me struck me and I repented. But it was done, and Eleanor must abide by her word.

I felt two trembling hands scarcely touching my head, then heard

r. Impach say, as he went back to his canvas, that he was totally in-pable of producing the effect he wished. Very impolite that unded! Still, there was something in the tone that prevented my eling vexed. I laughed and called Fanny, and in a few moments they derstood each other; for Herr Impach drew a small sketch on the ge of the canvas, and Fanny cleverly executed it.

Before she had finished, the artist was hard at work.

When first I saw how reserved and shy Mr. Impach was, I felt pleased the idea that during the sittings I should not be troubled by tedious nversation. And after all it was I who broke the silence.

I began by asking him which picture he preferred in all our col-ction.

"I can only tell that when I have seen it a second time," he swered. "I had proposed to ask permission to do so to-day!"

"Of course the gallery is always open to you. When you go, pray ok at the picture which is my favourite—the Weeping Girl—in e corner of the middle room. It is quite a masterpiece."

"I remarked it yesterday. It is a pretty subject; but done at a ne when good pictures were scarce. It is a mannered, French inting."

I was displeased with this answer, and so we were again silent, until er a time, he begged me to open my eyes, which I had half-closed ring my reverie. Having been so inattentive, I owed him some urtesy; I asked him, therefore, if he drew nothing but portraits.

"Quite the contrary," he said, "this is my first portrait."

"And the other—Snowdrop?"

"Was a mere fancy composition."

When he recommended me a little repose, I asked him to come th me into the gallery, where we could rest while admiring the old sterpieces.

Our steps soon directed us to the Rembrandt-room, which Mr. pach never ceases to praise. He asked me to examine one of the tures closely, and made me remark the apparently coarse work, ich renders the picture very similar to a dirty palette. Then he k me a few steps away. Every stroke, every patch of colour had significance; all was harmony, beauty. I had never remarked se things so much before, and conclude it must have been Mr. pach's enthusiastic admiration that made me see so many fresh auties in the picture. My own eyes certainly never would have covered so much. I wished Ernest had been present. How delight-he would have been!

After a while I went to the centre of the room, where, as you know, nds a beautiful copy of the Wounded Boy carried by the Dolphin—only piece of sculpture attributed to Raphael. Laying my hand the pretty boy's forehead, I looked up at Mr. Impach, and said:

"I have admired Rembrandt with you, but it is here I pay th greater veneration. Your art is but patchwork, when compared wi the life, the reality produced by sculpture."

I felt sure, Amelia, I had said something very clever, and I ha spoken in a pretentious tone. You should have seen the young artis astonished look.

After a short pause, and pressed for an answer by my questionin looks, he said:

"Am I to understand, that you compare painting and sculptu with each other? That you prefer the latter to the former? Yo cannot be in earnest! Your good taste, your artistic mind cann thus lead you astray. Some favourite may for the moment influen your judgment—and I must confess that this boy is a fine piece art—although I do not believe that Raphael ever laid hands on it."

I stood astonished at his words, which seemed to admit of no co tradiction. But I would not give in so soon.

"I cannot help *loving* a statue more than a canvas. To touch th boy's forehead, to lay my hand upon his arm, allows me doubly t enjoy this work of art. Painting compared with sculpture is mon tonous."

"What is holiest to us is not made for the touch of the hand," sai the artist in a strangely moved tone. "For highest perfection w look upwards. As to the monotony of painting, you forget that th brush has all the world at its disposal, from the glow of the sinkin sun on the summit of the Alps to the sparkle in a beautiful ey The chisel can produce men and animals, nothing more—it ma not touch the eye; and what is a human head without the eye It may be pleasing to the senses, never to the mind. It is as yo say—made to be touched."

Was this not going too far, Amelia! To use my own words again me! Still I was persuaded that I had been wrong in my opinion, an tried to find words which admitted this in not too generous a wa when a visitor was announced.

Although Count Werdan is a general favourite in the family, his vis was less welcome than usual at this particular moment. I could no tell why myself. He is an intimate friend of my brother's, a cleve lively young man, and to me all kindness and attention.

He had scarcely entered, when a bouquet of violets was in m hands, a complimentary salutation sounded in my ears.

"I come from your brother," he said, "who gave me permission t watch the first steps that Snowdrop has made to-day."

"Then you come in vain," I answered, "for not a living creatu besides my brother and cousin Dorothy with her embroidery, will pas the threshold of the studio until the picture is completed. I wil however, give myself the pleasure of presenting to you its author."

When I had pronounced the artist's name I stopped, thinking that I had done enough. What was it that with irresistible force induced me to open my lips again, and also present the Count to the artist?

The Count had much to tell me about a party that had been given the night before, and which I had not chosen to attend.

Save in the misfortune of my absence, a delightful little fête. The Baronne d'O. sang beautifully. Mdlle. Ardorf was prettier than ever.

"Do you know that your brother has asked me to dine here the day after to-morrow?"

"Yes. I know also that you are to ride Ali, who has enjoyed freedom so long, that he will not hear of anything in the way of reins. If nothing important keeps me from doing so, I shall come with you all, even at the cost of having to hurry my toilet for the ball afterwards. See what honour I do to your far-famed horsemanship."

"I shall ride my best! But you must promise me a bravo from your ruby lips!"

"Deserve it, before you claim it."

The artist had stood aside, absorbed in the contemplation of a picture. Of course our conversation could not interest him, as he does not take part in our amusements. I asked him whether we should continue our work, and on his agreeing, I dismissed the Count, and returned to the studio, where cousin Dorothy sweetly slumbered in an arm-chair.

Listening to her monotonous discourse is no very pleasant thing, so I took care to speak in whispers, not to disturb the good old soul's repose. Mr. Impach answered in the same tone. He told me that he can paint me far better when I speak, as a natural expression of countenance is in that case more easily obtained.

All at once he asked me if I had ever learnt to draw?

"A little," was my answer; "but masters and copies are so pedantic. I never could find any pleasure in copying Hubert's landscapes."

"Have you never tried to copy any object before you—a flower, a piece of furniture, anything?"

"Never! Do you think I should be able to do so? I am not fond of being a dauber! Still I will try, and not be unhappy if I do not obtain a brilliant result. What shall I do?—let me see—my left hand!"

I tried to give my hand a position in which to draw it would not be over difficult. The artist silently watched me; at last he said in a whisper:—"Do not draw your hand."

"Why? Is it too difficult?"

"Not more difficult than many other things. But what does it matter if you draw a flower massively that ought to be light, or make corners to an inkstand that in reality is round? Whilst your hand—"

Here he broke off. What does he mean? Does he want to defend

my own hand against the distorted image I should make of it? Confess, Amelia, that he is a strange man.

Soon after that we brought the sitting to a close, and Herr Impach asked if he might return to-morrow?

"Of course. Shall I show my brother the beginning of your work?" I said, walking up to the easel.

"Pray do not even look at it yourself—not until to-morrow afternoon. Do not show it to any one," he answered hesitatingly.

"Very well, I will not. But why?"

"Because I should have to explain so many things. I should have to say why this is so and that otherwise, and very likely not be understood in the end. You will not look at the picture, nor show it to any one?"

"I have promised," I could not refrain from answering in an injured tone, so loudly that Cousin Dorothy started up.

As I was leaving the room with a nod of the head, I saw Herr Impach gazing after me with the most pitiable expression of countenance. What was it to me after all? Still I looked round, and went out, saying in a friendly tone: "To-morrow, then!"

Into how long a letter has this grown! Good-bye, my dear Amelia, I shall write again as soon as there is anything interesting to relate.

I am sitting at my little table in my snowdrop dress, my hair arranged as this morning, which is very becoming. Perhaps I shall wear it so until the picture is finished.

Good night, my Amelia—you to whom I whisper all my most secret thoughts!

Your Eleanor.

P.S.—What if I availed myself of the artist's good taste, and consulted him as to the toilet I am to wear at the ball

IV.

Scarcely four days have passed since my last letter, dear Amy. I have not yet received an answer, and yet I must write to you again, for I have much to tell that has happened in the last few days.

The ball given by Ernest in honour of my birthday was a great success. It was in some measure the opening of the season, as there had not yet been dancing anywhere. I acted the lady of the house, with cousin Dorothy at my side, and I seem to have done well, for as soon as our guests were gone, Ernest kissed me. Directly afterwards he put me from him again, saying:

"Let me glance at you, for I believe you never looked better in your life. How did you happen to think of dressing so artistically?"

That is what I must tell you, Amy. I asked Herr Impach's opinion as to what I should wear, and he promised to consider the important

question. He held a consultation with Fanny, and the result was what I have written. In what the change really consisted of is difficult to say. Something suppressed in one place, something added in another, a ribbon, a few flowers in the hair; but all this not dictated by a moment's caprice; no—systematically, artistically done.

But I, who wished to relate everything in good order, have begun where I should have ended.

The day before yesterday Ernest came into the studio to look at the picture for the first time. I also had not seen it until then.

Fancy how astonished we were when we saw no trace of the first work of art—conception, manner, all was totally new, and to *me* seemed even better than in the former picture. I waited impatiently to hear what Ernest would say. After a long contemplation his eye sought the artist, who stood preparing his palette in a corner of the room. He went up to him, pressed his hand, and said:

"You are a true artist! This second work, if achieved as it is begun, must surpass the first. You have my hearty congratulation!"

Then Ernest explained to me all the beauties of the picture, and the artist listened, pleased, I suppose, to be so well understood. Before he went, Ernest invited him to dinner for the next day, the day on which our ball was to take place.

I had expected the artist to refuse, for he has told me that he leads a most retired life. To my great astonishment he accepted with pleasure.

Yesterday, when I entered the room where Ernest with his friends was waiting for me, I had entirely forgotten the young artist. Count Werdan excused his velvet coat, pleading that Ernest had expressly wished for morning dress, as we were to take a ride after dinner. His eyes had a triumphant sparkle in expectation of what awaited him on Ali's back. A tall, elegant figure now came up to me, in which I hardly recognised Herr Impach, who looked so distinguished as to leave it doubtful which was the better looking, he or Werdan.

The conversation during dinner turned almost exclusively on the ball, the young artist took no part in it, for he knows none of the persons of whom we spoke.

When I came out into the courtyard in my riding habit, the gentlemen were already assembled, and the horses were being brought round.

Cousin Dorothy approached the carriage, which she was to have all to herself to-day, when my brother looked out for some one to keep her company, and chanced on Impach. He, however, politely declined, while he helped Dorothy into the carriage. When we were all mounted, except the artist and Werdan, the latter walked up to Ali, who showed how fresh he was by neighing and pawing violently. Werdan was stepping carelessly with his riding-whip under his arm and buttoning his glove.

The trick, by means of which he thought to attain his purpose, was to jump on the horse before the latter could foresee his intention. But it was all in vain, for Ali flew to the other side as soon as he felt the slightest touch of the stirrup.

Seeing that all was useless, Werdan with one effort sprang from the ground into the saddle, but before we had time to applaud, Ali commenced a series of bounds which prevented Werdan from finding the stirrups. First he kicked, then reared, and in a moment our Count lay stretched upon the ground.

I thought that Ali was already out of the courtyard, for the grooms ran wildly about, when suddenly I heard him neigh behind me, as a hand was stroking his neck. It was Herr Impach, who, as the horse had tried to rush by him, had caught hold of the reins, and was now quieting him with the soft tones of his voice. My brother rode up to him, and after they had exchanged a few words, I saw Impach get on Ali's back with one leap. The horse reared and plunged, but did not succeed in throwing his rider.

Count Werdan was being brushed by the grooms, grumbling all the while, but in the end he was content to take another horse.

Who on earth could have thought that this son of the Muses was a better horseman than Werdan!

Of course he now rode out with us, and Ernest begged him to go on before with young Prince Arsent, so as to enable him to observe the horse.

I had thought that an artist could only look well with a palette in his hand; now I was obliged to admit, that the powerful, elastic figure of Herr Impach entirely eclipsed the young dandy at his side. The latter is a nobleman of large fortune, whom his family wish to see soon married. If I do not give a false meaning to all he says, I am the happy being on whom his choice has fallen. He is a very timid youth, and does not dare to open his mouth when Werdan is by, whom he considers far too dangerous a competitor.

We hurried quickly out of the town, the two above named on before, my brother and Werdan at my side, the others in the rear. I soon got tired of our too sedate pace, and proposed a gallop through the park. This was what Ali seemed to have been waiting for; he expressed his joy by wild leaps. As my horse was beginning to follow the dangerous example, Ernest bade me ride on with Werdan, and Impach stayed behind, at my brother's side.

I was delighted with the fresh air, and the pleasant exercise; perhaps also at the thought of the coming ball. So pleased, indeed, was I, that I could not endure the sombre face at my side. I tried to cheer Werdan by saying:

"Are you still unhappy about your failure in breaking in Ali?"

"Yes!" he answered, in a cross tone. "A number of such small

failures may bring about the great one which would drive me to despair!"

"Even were you not the horseman you are generally held to be, plenty of excellent qualities remain to save you from a great failure. Look at the fear with which you inspire young Arsent!"

"A great merit indeed! Still all despondency or dissatisfaction vanishes in your presence. When I see you ride so gracefully, your white feathers flying in the air, all my boyish dreams of Armidas and Clorindas return!"

"This is the first direct compliment you have ever paid me, Count. You know that I do not take any notice of such things. Must I believe that your perfect good taste has abandoned you with your good humour?"

"I feel strangely moved,—the forest, the favour of being your sole attendant in this ride, the golden evening sky which gleams through the openings in the trees—perhaps even the reaction of my bad humour of a little while ago. You know that I am anything but sentimental, still at this moment, I should not be ashamed of the words of a poet, to express to you all I feel. Oh! could I do great deeds for you, surmount dangers, bring you safe through the fiercest flames ——"

"Pray reserve all that for some other occasion," I interrupted, stopping my horse at the same time. "Rather see how we can get through this thicket; the young birch-trees force themselves very unreasonably into our path!"

The Count did his best to disperse the branches, without dismounting. He succeeded partly, but one little tree obstinately bent across, and completely obstructed the way. Just as we heard the others come up, Werdan, afraid that some one else would get the start of him, caught hold of the young birch with a strong hand, while with the other he motioned me to ride through.

Either the tree was too much for him or his bad humour rendered him awkward. He let it go suddenly, my horse reared, and leaped forward; in an instant I was at a distance of ten feet. To save Ernest all alarm, I laughed outright as soon as my horse stood still, then touched my head to see if anything had happened to me. My hat was lost; I saw its white feather fluttering in the wind, on the branch of a fir tree far out of reach. The branch had probably been held down by the birch tree, and had been jerked up along with the latter.

I was surrounded by all. Ernest, pale as death, enquired if anything was the matter with me. Count Werdan tried to make his horse go down on his knees before me, but desisted from his extravagant idea, on Ernest's exclaiming:

"He is far too proud to do anything of the kind."

Useless efforts were now made to get my hat back again; and, to put an end to them, I tied my pocket-handkerchief under my chin. But it was too small. I could not expect any of the gentlemen to climb the slippery fir-tree; and with a riding whip the little dangling thing was not to be reached. We turned our horses, to get home quickly, but before starting, something urged me to turn my head—certainly not the wish to see my faithless hat once more. There, at the foot of the large fir-tree, stood Ali, with his rider, his eyes lighted with strange fire, his ears put back. What was the matter with the animal? We very soon found out. The reckless young man, who seems to hold his life very cheaply, was setting spurs to the wild horse so that the latter, after several fruitless efforts to throw his rider, leaped straight up into the air. At the same moment the rider stood upright in his stirrups, and with a firm hand caught hold of the unhappy hat, just as Ali was making off at a violent gallop. All this happened in half the time it takes me to tell it. We stood breathless until Herr Impach returned, quietly riding the foaming horse. With eyes that craved pardon for the rash act, he gave me back my hat. I bent my head, and lowered my riding-whip, for I could not find words with which to thank him. It was Ernest who spoke.

"Your youth alone can excuse the rash act you have committed." This was said in a fatherly tone. Before he had ended, Ernest rode up to him, took his hand, and said, so softly that only I and the artist could hear him: "I can admire what you have done but never approve of it! If I have spoken sharply, ascribe it to the anxiety I have suffered for you. It must be painful to my sister to have been the innocent cause of so dangerous and bold an exploit. Make your excuses to her," he concluded, with a smile.

I called Herr Impach to my side, and we rode on in silence. It was not so easy, Amy dear, to find the right word to say to a man who had a moment ago risked his life for a *hat* of mine. Happily he began.

"Your brother is right. I have behaved like a boy, whose fame for courage and daring is not yet firm enough to allow him to miss a single opportunity of displaying those qualities. Will you believe me, that nothing of the kind crossed my mind when I saw your feather fluttering in the wind? I perceived that the small handkerchief was insufficient for protecting your hair from the evening damp, and of course I tried to recover your hat. I felt sure of succeeding, having from childhood been accustomed to horses, when I always preferred the wildest for my rides through fields and forests."

"You were born in the country?" I asked.

He answered, hesitatingly, "My father lived there,——"

"Oh, a landlord proprietor?" I interrupted.

"No proprietor; only steward of a large estate. He died early; so

did my mother. My recollections of both parents are but dim. But what am I doing? Forcing the story of my childhood upon your ears' Pardon me."

"Do not forget that I asked you to do so, Herr Impach; I even want to hear more. How came you, who lived in the country, to be an artist?"

"I lived at home until my fourteenth year, for after my father's death his brother had succeeded him. One day a friend, who was staying with us a short while, saw by chance some of my drawings. Declaring them to show talent, he asked permission to take me with him. I was introduced to one of the celebrities of our capital, and there remained until I could do for myself, that is to say, until five years ago. That is my simple story. Without your question, I should never have dared to mention a word of it."

"And was Providence kind in taking you from your rural solitude, and chaining you to art, for at the age you were a positive vocation could hardly exist? Are you happy with your art?"

"What would life be without it? Art is all I possess. For art alone my heart throbs. When I paint, I paint with heart and soul, not with hand and head alone. Could I only tell you what a poor artist feels, when he stands at his easel, his palette in hand, with a worthy model before him!"

It had become quite dark, so that we hurried our horses; still we were not yet out of the park. Is it not strange, Amy, when suddenly new views open to us, new horizons appear of which we had not an idea? What had I thought an artist's life was like? I cannot say, and believe that I thought little or nothing when the word "artist" struck my ear. Now I listened to things which, though new, still sounded interesting to me.

When I had begged the young artist to continue, he spoke as follows:—

"A Columbus, when he enriches humanity with the numberless plains of the new world, cannot be more proud or happy than the true artist who has achieved his masterpiece. The discoverer, who with watchful eye measures the far distance, may be agitated by feelings similar to those of an artist who stands before the blank canvas, on which he alone sees the future—but at the decisive moment the artist is by far the happier of the two. The discoverer, when he lands, only sees a small spot of the world he has long dreamed of, and found at last—he is contented. But the artist with a single glance measures his whole work; it is he who truly enriches the world, for not what was its own before does he give back to it—new unhoped-for things does he create. He may exclaim with truth: 'Had I not lived the world would be the poorer!'

"Were it not so dark," my companion continued after a time, and

in softer tones, "I should perhaps see an astonished look in your eyes you are too noble for a disdainful one. You are right if you ask What have you done, that gives you a right to feel, to speak thus Where are the masterpieces that justify such pride? True! as yet have done nothing worth speaking of. Still I feel that I too sha accomplish great things, that I shall yet earn a right to say: Thi work is mine, and that of none other!"

The artist was silent, and I felt that an answer was required. Dea Amy, when I now reflect on his words, they seem full of arrogance an self-conceit! Had you heard the tone of heartfelt persuasion wit which he spoke them, you would, like myself, have exclaimed:

"I, too, have the same conviction! Good speed!"

When we reached home we found the house, to my great surprise in complete darkness. Not a word of reproach fell upon the servant who received us, and yet Ernest is very severe in these matters. I the dark he led me to my room, after dismissing the gentlemen, wh hurried home to dress. Fanny had taken to heart Herr Impach' recommendations, and would not leave me until Ernest came to fetc me. First imagine my surprise, when, descending the stairs on Ernest' arm, I found the house changed into a tropical garden, in which th most beautiful camellias, ferns, and palm trees stood side by side Ernest now took me to my small boudoir, into which I had not se foot for some days. It was changed into the most delightful littl fairy bower that ever was dreamed of. On one of the walls, amids beautiful leafy plants, was an empty space, destined I was told t receive the "Snowflower" when completed. In answer to the grate ful look I turned upon Ernest, he told me that although the idea ha been his, the execution, for which he had no time, was entirely owin to Werdan, who had been indefatigable in arranging everything to m taste.

"Here he is!" Ernest continued, as a servant entered, announc ing the Count.

A few minutes of cosy talk with the two; then the guests bega to arrive, and I was obliged to go and receive them in the ball-room.

A little while after the dancing had begun, dear old Baron Gerhard made his appearance. He is Werdan's uncle on the mother's side, and ver fond of his nephew, whose good heart and sound character he neve ceases to praise. He is an original, pleasant old gentleman, so that devoted all my free time during that evening to him. Whenever I gav him my arm to walk through the rooms with him, he would regularl stop like an automaton before the picture in our gallery which ha been declared the pearl of the whole collection—an incomparabl Rembrandt. With the gallantry belonging to times past, he woul say:

"Although it seems a sin to admire anything beside you, as all mus

pale when compared with you, still I cannot refrain from declaring this picture to be the object of all my most fervent desires. Were it in my possession, my Rembrandt collection would be complete. Every progress, every change in the great master's manner do I possess and the conclusion, the crown of all, I must miss. It is a dreadful injustice!"

You can imagine, Amy, that to listen to the lamentable story of this monomaniac more than once was anything but amusing. I am not so weary of the world as to despise a ballroom with its glow of lights, with the soft scent of flowers, the merry tones of the orchestra, the whirling couples, who danced with such fire, as though they had at last found the aim of their life, after having long sought for it in vain. It all had a magic effect upon me. As lady of the house, with whom they all wished to dance, I was obliged to adopt the Russian manner, and only dance once round with each. To give you details of the ball would be impossible, for very few of the younger people were in their right senses. Now a hasty word with someone who went past; a moment after a congratulation and a smile of gratitude; now a dance; and now a short conversation entered into with the speed of a firework. The supper at last put an end to all this. As we sat round the long table in the narrow hall, I could see what a choice collection of pretty faces were assembled that evening. And all were so gay; there seemed no end to the talking and laughing.

When the cotillon was announced, I suddenly remembered that I had not yet chosen a partner. I looked about me for a moment. There, in my boudoir, stood Herr Impach amidst my flowers, his eye intently bent on me as I passed. Why not he, as well as any other? It was a mad thought, was it not, Amy? I felt that in a moment, and went up to Ernest to ask him if he approved of my choosing Werdan for the cotillon.

As I came up, my brother took the young man at his side by the hand, and said to me:

"Prince Arsent has just begged for the honour of your hand for this dance. I have promised to be his advocate in this important cause."

How very kind, brother, I thought. Still, being disengaged, I took Arsent's arm, and walked up to our places with him. I should have preferred Werdan for a partner; because his uncle had taught me to view his character in quite a new light. All the gentlemen in the room seemed to think that, being lady of the house, I had no right to rest for a moment, and perpetually called me up. Never in all my life have I done so much in the way of dancing, no, not even in the country. At last I could stand it no longer, and stretched my hand out in defence, every time I saw someone come up to me. By this means I was at last enabled to listen to the idyll Arsent was pouring into my ear. He described his castle, its picturesque neighbourhood,

and even his father, who seems to be a very nice old gentlemar
After some time, during which no one had come near, I again saw
hand, which invited me to dance, with a bouquet of snowdrops.
did not look up, but refused, as before, by a movement of the han
when all at once the snowdrops fell to the ground. This was
sign of despair which urged me to lift up my eyes. Before me stoo
Herr Impach with drooping head, just about to return to his dark corne

"I was tired, and have refused more than ten times!" I said i
excuse. Still, I got up, and laid my hand on his shoulder. Do yo
remember, Amy, how we admired the Queen's Grand Chamberlai
Eppstein, when he showed us how he danced with her Majesty
Well, Herr Impach danced the same way with me, that is to say
without placing his arm round my waist; the only hold of me he ha
was my hand on his shoulder. And yet I do not recollect ever havin
flown through a room so lightly! When we returned to my seat, th
strange man took his snowdrops up again, and went quietly away.

When the ball was over, and everyone gone, my brother asked m
to go with him into my new little room, as he wished to speak with m

"You are twenty years old to-day," he began, "and although
could wish for nothing better than that things should for ever go on a
they do now, still I must not take any notice of my heart's desire, mus
not be selfish, but think of your future welfare with the disinterested
ness of a parent. That a great number of persons would be only to
happy to connect themselves with your beauty, your youth and you
name, you know full well. To select the worthiest amongst these
and propose them to you for acceptance or rejection, is my duty. I
is with such a proposal that I now come to you—can you not guess
Eleanor?"

"Count Werdan has been more attentive to me this evening tha
he ever was. Can it be he?"

"Werdan, my child, will certainly come some day or other, and tha
is one of the reasons why I should like you to decide upon somethin
soon. I think highly of him; number him among my best friends
but in the choice of a brother-in-law I must take into consideration
great many things. You know that Werdan possesses nothing beside
the modest fortune of his mother, his father having squandered al
before he died. For half his wants he is dependent on his old uncle
Now although, in all probability, Werdan and his cousin will be th
old Baron's heirs, still we cannot count upon that with any degree o
security. You see that Werdan is out of the question, my child. My
aspirant is Prince Arsent!"

"Dear Ernest," I answered, putting my arm round my brother's
neck, "let me still for a time be happy with you! I know that you
only advise me for my own good, but in that case do not speak to me
of Arsent."

"Do not decide in such a hurry, Eleanor!" spoke Ernest softly. "You do not know Arsent yet; take time to do so, then give me your answer. You know that neither your mother nor your ancestors waited like shepherdesses until their heart spoke, but married in the interest of their families, and were happy all the same. Wherever *you* go, my sweet Eleanor, you will see happy faces shine around you, for your smile alone brings joy. Good-night to you now, dear sister; sleep sweetly, and do not let your dreams be disturbed by any importunate suitors. You have all the time you like before you!"

I went to my room in deep thought. If I had you here, we should soon find out together what was the matter. But how describe the state my mind is in? The total absence of any liking for Arsent is in opposition to the sincere wish to act according to my brother's advice. It is impossible that Werdan should be the reason of this inner conflict. I do not think that I ever thought of him as anything more than a pleasant companion. This evening, certainly, when all was arranged so beautifully to surprise me, I was for a moment moved, but it was most likely nothing more than the pardon for his awkwardness during our ride.

You find out, Amy dear, what is the matter with your Eleanor. I shall go to bed and try to forget the hundred new impressions of these last days.

Ernest has told me how old Baron Gerhardt offered him an enormous sum for his "Old Woman" by Rembrandt. Is it not foolish of him to think that my brother cares so little for his pictures as to sell any of them?

Good-bye, dear friend, I must at last close this endless letter.

Your ELEANOR.

V.

Not more than a week ago, Geoffrey, I was sure of enjoying to-day with you the last "Ottobrata";* sure that I should have turned my back on Germany for a long time. And here I am, spell-bound, at once the happiest and the most miserable of mortals!

When I promised to paint a second "Snowdrop" I went home with the firm intention of doing nothing of the kind. I meant to pack up and hurry into your arms, my friend. To this heroic resolve I held fast for a long while; but in the meantime I continually put off my journey, for reasons so sound that I could not tell you one of them at the present moment. Nearer and nearer drew the day, when something must be decided upon. I sat down in good earnest, trying for once to become clear in my mind. What was I in such a mortal

* In Rome so-called excursions made every Thursday in October, when high and low, rich and poor, dine out in the country.

fright about? I asked myself. Frankly and openly the answer presented itself to me: Like an idiot, you are in love with a being whom rank, beauty and riches for ever separate you from, between whom and you stands a barrier across which you should never have looked, as surmounting it is one of the few impossibilities on earth. Hurry away, before ruin becomes inevitable!

To this truthful confession, Geoffrey, my mind began opposing a whole army of reasons with such Machiavellian subtlety that I myself was surprised. First the question: Why should what you feel conscious of be love? Have you not longed for beauty alone all your life? Is it not natural that when a being like this appears to the eye, that had long sighed for perfection, your soul should rejoice in having at last found the long-sought ideal? What you feel is admiration, naught beyond admiration! Stay, and your tranquillity of mind will return.

All that seemed so probable to me, that I remained. Some excuse I must give for not keeping my word, I thought, and on the day determined upon, I took my way to the Waldemberg Palace.

A vile sycophant you would have declared me to be had you seen me. I was charmed that the sittings were to begin the very next day, happy at the Prince's kind words, inebriated by the amiable ways of the Princess. When I got home, I confessed to myself that the princess regards my talent somewhat in the light of the cleverness of a terrier who fetches a stick out of the water. In her presence no such thought struck me. I tried to persuade myself that her engaging manner was not owing to depreciation. I went home in a state of ecstacy, Geoffrey; 'tis with deep shame that I confess it; when the thought of flight once more occurred to me, I called myself a coward —a coward, do you hear?

Armed with the determination of a hero, I entered the room which had been assigned to me for a studio; and my trembling hands had somewhat recovered their firmness by the time I had ended my preparations. Just as I was about to examine the canvas, the door opened, and *she* entered. How shall I describe her to you? I would give anything to be able to draw a worthy image of her on this paper. I stood there like a stupid lout, who is conscious of having visited his neighbour's orchard, instead of attending at school. But her amiable ways soon relieved me of the embarrassment her first appearance had caused. She sat down; with one single movement of her hand, laid her dress into light and graceful folds which I should have spent hours in producing; then asked if all was as I desired. She did this in so self-conscious a tone, that direct opposition woke up within me, and the thought struck me: These fine ladies are all alike; a set of wax dolls. Strong in their power over men, their pride and arrogance know no bounds.

I then told her that her hair, built up high on the head, according to the present fashion, did not suit an artistic purpose.

I had calculated upon her leaving the room, to hide from me the artful contrivances with which she had adorned her head. No such thing! She gracefully leaned back in her easy-chair, picked a battery of pins out of the plaits and curls, so that these fell like fluid gold upon her snowy shoulders; and when this operation, during which I dared not look on, was completed, what do you think she did, Geoffrey? In the coolest manner possible she told me to arrange her hair to my own taste!

I felt that this must be addressed to the "terrier," for I knew well that she would never let an equal come in contact with her golden hair! Even knowing this, I was moved as by electric fire, at the mere thought of touching the beloved locks. I walked up to her and laid both my hands on her hallowed head. Had I but never dared so much, Geoffrey! Dearly I paid for the sacrilege. Scarcely had I felt the soft, silky mass around my fingers, when I began trembling violently, the hair seemed to wind round my hands like serpents; I quivered as a child. And yet I felt as if I *must* press that beloved head to my swelling heart, with all the force of the most ardent love that ever entered a man's breast, and as if I must shed tears on that golden hair, tears that would lighten my heart's anguish. As a child draws them from the fire, I drew my hands out of the tempting region. Walking back to my place, I won composure enough to declare myself unable to accomplish the task.

You, who are not present, cannot comprehend all this. You must think me childish, foolish; yet I never was more myself than at the present moment, Geoffrey. A sure evidence of this is the picture I am now painting, which is so admired by all who see it. It certainly is the best I ever made. Besides, you must not think that this love always closes my lips. I can speak with her for hours, about our art, about my life, even about my plans for the future. And she listens so patiently; even helps me in planning; so that we never want for subjects of conversation. Sometimes, as I watch her speaking to other young men (a swarm of them surround her, and drive me to despair), it seems almost as if her gaiety did not come so entirely from the heart, as is the case when we are alone. Her interest seems to be less lively in listening to the talk of those who pay court to her, than when I explain some secret of art.

By what merits she is judged by persons of this class you will understand when I tell you what happened to me.

The Prince, who fully appreciates the little talent I may have, is just twice as kind and cordial with me since I broke in a wild horse of his, which had thrown its rider. What my art did *not* gain for me—a warm pressure of the hand—I was to owe to my strong sinews, to a daring leap!

And since that day I am admitted to their circle. If I do not attend to general invitations, then I am seized upon in the studio, and forced to take part in their pleasures. Daily I must support new delights and new tortures.

It was thus I came to a ball last week, given in the house of the Prince. Had you but seen her!

I have danced with her, Geoffrey, she had refused every one because she was tired, and with me she danced, although I scarcely know where I found impudence enough to ask her.

Do you think that I could have touched her person? Not to save my life, and so I danced with her without any hold.

What I felt, during the moments we flew through the room, her hand on my shoulder, her breath so near me, has brought me to the resolution that I *must* hurry away. As soon as my picture is finished, I leave this town never to return. 'Tis all useless; I may close my eyes as much as I like, some light still dawns through them. The day will come when she will follow the man of her brother's or her own choice to the altar. And what then? *Where* should I find strength to support such dreadful misery? *where* the courage not to end this poor life? which is no life when the sunshine of her eyes does not enlighten it.

I filled the measure of my sufferings by watching her at the ball, as she moved through the maze of her numberless admirers. Not one who would not give up friends and country for one pressure of her hand. Wherever she goes, loving looks follow her graceful figure, whilst she moves about as if it were natural to her to receive homage wherever she turns. It was with throbs of happiness I remarked, that no one of her many admirers was especially favoured, yet more than one of them would sacrifice life and fortune for her. Amongst others a certain Count Werdan; a man whose wit and presence of mind I should under other circumstances greatly admire, but whom I find insupportable, because he is a sort of *intime* in the house. Not rich himself, he is the favourite of an old uncle, who as much as the nephew seems to wish for a connection with Princess Eleanor. I made the old gentleman's acquaintance at the ball, where he showed himself an enthusiastic admirer of art. He took my arm, and leading me to the finest picture in the Waldemberg collection, an exquisite Rembrandt, began praising it as a lover does his ideal. His most ardent wish is to possess the picture; a fact he told me the first evening of our acquaintance; and in the presence of his nephew he exclaimed, addressing himself to the latter, What a purpose to rob one of one's sleep!—if we could obtain both the treasures of this house!"

I listened anxiously, for it is a habit I have acquired to apply all I hear to Eleanor. This time I was right.

"Why should we not succeed?" the old gentleman continued. "The old one for me, the young one for you!"

The Count made a sign to his uncle not to continue, as he seemed to think it unnecessary that I should know of their plans. But I had heard enough. The uncle wishes for Rembrandt's picture (it represents a shrivelled old woman) for himself, for his nephew the daughter of the house. I could have strangled the old gentleman with the greatest pleasure on earth. Instead of that I had to suffer him to take my arm, and confidently whisper in my ear how he had offered an enormous price for the picture, but had not obtained it all the same; how often his nephews had tried for it, thinking to please their uncle by their efforts. Now he had promised to name that one of the two his heir who should succeed in getting the picture. "Do you think I shall ever be so happy as to call it mine?" he concluded.

"I heartily wish you may!" I answered. "The prize you have promised is great enough to sharpen their wits."

To find out diplomatically what Eleanor thought of Werdan, I began talking of the old gentleman's hobby.

"I know all about it," she said. "Of course, there can be no question of my brother's giving up the picture. If the old Baron would content himself with a copy, *that* we should only be too delighted to let him have."

She then broke off, and began speaking of other subjects, so that I knew as much or as little of Werdan as ever. But it is exactly in this silence of hers that I see approaching danger; and I have resolved to go away whenever Werdan comes to the house, as I could not support the spectacle of a happy courtship.

I must close my letter now, not having dressed yet for the evening, which I must do, as there is a soirée at the palace.

Geoffrey, for more than a month past I cannot entertain a thought without despising myself for it half an hour afterwards—a pleasant state of things.

No, I cannot support it any longer. As soon as my picture is finished I take flight. Expect me, dearest friend, at latest in four weeks. Get me a room not too distant from your lodging. Good-bye.

Yours, WALTER.

(*To be continued.*)

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY.

ENGLAND was passing through that fiery trial, from the ashes o which sprang all that is most precious in a nation's life—th spirit of pure religion, of political freedom, of daring enterprise, th spirit of the highest poetry. Mary was on the throne, writing th history of her reign in blood. It was then that Philip Sidney wa born.

The gloom and terror that pervaded the time doubtless tinged i some degree his earliest impressions. He may have caught fragment of tales about burning men, and women dragged from the arms o husbands or children, told by his nurses while he was supposed to b sleeping in his little bed. As he played at his mother's feet, a vagu notion of something that was to be feared may have filtered into hi young intelligence, as in tones of anguish that would naturally arous her boy's loving attention, she implored her husband, whose Protestan opinions were publicly known, not needlessly to expose himself to th royal displeasure. But all such shadows must have been quickly swep away from his mind by the wonder-world of sunshine, and waving trees, and antlered deer, and bright field flowers, which the park o Penshurst (his father's country house) must have been for a child.

Whether scampering down the long passages, half believing tha from some dark corner one of those terrible black-robed figure belonging to the Spanish inquisition, that he had heard so ofte described, might spring out upon him, or whether chasing butterflie over the grass, we may be sure that one little figure, somewhat smalle than himself, was always at his side. This was his sister Mary, th closest friend and confidante of his whole life, from the day when h began to prattle, till the day when the funeral pageant for the young hero swept in sad state through the streets of London.

On the accession of Elizabeth, the Sidney family came out of th comparative retirement in which they had lately been living into th most brilliant light of court favour. The Queen, with all a woman' quick discernment, soon found out what true metal there was in th Sidney character, and by her Sir Henry, little Philip's father, was mad at once Lord Deputy of Ireland and Lord President of Wales. I this latter capacity Sir Henry Sidney and his family spent much o their time at Ludlow Castle.

Philip Sidney was now naturally and healthily worked upon by al the ruling influences of his day. An intense religious earnestness such as has seldom stirred in the heart of any nation, was living an breathing at this period throughout the mass of the English people

whispering at their firesides, crying aloud in their streets, colouring their literature, turning their very girls into deep divines. Young Sidney caught the noble infection, and a strong religious feeling became one of the foundation stones of his character.

A reverence, nay, almost a worship of their Queen, was one of the articles in the creed of the Protestant gentlemen of the time. They did not see her as we see her now through the microscope of criticism held up by the hand of some captious historian. To them she was the sovereign who had come to build up Bible Truth, and establish national prosperity. To them she was the Amazon who stood forward braver than any Brittomart or Bradamante as the champion of the reformed faith. To them she was the gracious patroness of every gentle art, of learning, and science, and commerce. To them she was the woman who, with a face that must have possessed an intellectual charm that no painter has handed down to us, smiled on them, and flirted with them, and loved each delicate flattery, each chivalrous service that is prized by the softest of her sex. Philip Sidney then, like every young man of his age and standing, learned to think of Elizabeth as one who was to be looked up to, as one who was to be obeyed, as one who was to be even died for with joy.

After the Reformation the minds of men and women in England woke as with an electric shock. In every one there was a great yearning to give a distinct form to this new something that had risen up within them. They dashed off sonnets, wrote plays and romances, composed treatises. In this respect Philip Sidney's times were very like our own. There has never been in England such an age of universal intellectual activity as the age of Elizabeth, until the age of Victoria. Philip's quickly developing talents made him foremost in this marked peculiarity of his epoch, and he literally lisped in numbers.

Sidney was sent to Shrewsbury School, where he was remarkable for his thoughtful, studious habits, and where he soon became a first-rate classical scholar. While thus advanced in mental culture, he was not behind in those manly exercises which were considered so indispensable for a gentleman of that day. He was early familiar with his saddle, and among his schoolfellows there was no more skilful fencer than he.

In due time Sidney went from Shrewsbury School to Oxford. During his college life he was no troller of merry catches at noisy supper-parties, no carpet knight who wrought havoc among the hearts of maids and matrons in the old university town. His nature was always more inclined to the grave than to the gay, and his high principle set up a barrier between him and the excesses of youth. At Oxford, however, he strengthened the bulwarks of his Greek and Latin, dreamt dreams for his future which were half literary and half martial, and made

one life-long friend. This was Fulke Greville, afterwards one of the most finished gentlemen and elegant scholars at the court of Elizabeth.

Philip Sidney's education was completed at eighteen. Boys went from school to college and left the university much earlier than they do now. The Queen at once took him into her own special service as she did all the young men of promise who were brought by their fathers to her court. She was a good and judicious mistress to them in the main; a little jealous and exacting perhaps at times, and now and then showing something of womanly caprice in her dealings with them, but on the whole kind and generous, and far-sighted for their welfare.

Philip Sidney's first entrance into public life was as member of an embassy that was sent to France to negotiate a marriage between Elizabeth and the Duc d'Alençon, the brother of the French King. Very strange and new must his experiences have been at the French court. Let us try for a moment to get a photographic view of what he saw there.

The central figure is that of a woman. As we look at her we are at first inclined to think her the very embodiment of tranquil elderly matronhood. The full form moves with a lazy ease, the hands are soft and round and white, a placid light shines in the face. But let us draw nearer and watch her more closely. What concentrated passion there is in those low tones, as she whispers to a black-robed priest who is bending towards her. What terrible energy stirs in every muscle of her frame, as she walks up and down her private room. What fierce gleams flash now and then from those quiet eyes, as she sits apart in deep thought. We turn away with a shudder, and well we may, for Catherine de Médicis is meditating the tragedy of Saint Bartholomew. We are not long in finding another prominent form. This time it is a man who attracts our attention. He tries to walk with dignity through the gilded hall, but his limbs move with an awkwardness that would seem to be better suited to a guard-room than a palace. He begins to make a gracious speech to an old veteran, but it ends in a meaningless joke. He stoops to clasp a bracelet that is falling from a white arm, but he does it so roughly that he crushes the shining band. They bow before him, they surround him with a delicate ceremonial worship of etiquette; but all in vain they cannot turn the clod into a divinity, and it is hard to believe that this is Charles the Ninth, King of France.

And now there is a sound as of music. Yet neither lute nor viol is touched; it is only the voice and the laughter of a woman. What subtle grace lurks in each fold of her dress, what love-meshes are woven by each floating lock of that radiant hair; how does soft desire sleep in her eyes, and wake up in her smile, and hang upon her cheek

No wonder that the schoolman neglects to notice whether the quantities are true or false when she speaks Latin. No wonder that the soldier forgets whether he belongs to the Pope or Calvin when the sunshine of her glances falls upon him. No wonder that they will suffer for her, no wonder that they will live for her, no wonder that they will die for her; for her, the brilliant, the frail, the fair; for her, Marguerite de Valois.

But how is it that the cavalier who is bending over this bright lady seems to find his task of courting her such a distasteful one? His compliments must be made of lead, to judge from the slowness with which they drop from his lips. His foot taps impatiently the marble floor, as if it wanted to be in the stirrup, or to be treading the grass far away in the forest. His eyes often wander restlessly from the lovely face before him. And she does not seem to like the game any better than he, for the fan often goes up to hide a yawn. We know him, this discontented suitor, we know him from that frank grace, so careless and yet so kingly. We know him from the fire of martial genius in his eyes. We know him, the joyous in love, the mighty in war, the prudent in council. Already we hear his battle cry: "Rally round my white plume. Brothers and comrades, rally round your Prince, your hero, your Henri of Navarre!" These two—Henri and Marguerite—are in a few days to be wedded. But there is no love between them. The bridegroom was enticed here by the arts of the Queen-mother, and is kept in a sort of honourable captivity. Besides, hatred of the Valois, born in his blood, is an effectual barrier between him and Marguerite. The bride has half a dozen other lovers that she prefers to her promised husband. But the eyes of Catherine are upon them, and the pair go on with their icy wooing.

But who is this, with his long hair distilling rich perfumes, with his gold-spangled doublet, and his neck hung round with jewels? Surely he must be some player who is come to amuse the grand folk at the royal wedding. No, he is a prince, and the crown will soon rest upon his head. He is the king's brother, Henri, Duc d'Anjou.

After this glimpse of the French court, we can well imagine what a change it must have been for young Sidney from the court of his own maiden Queen.

Philip Sidney was in Paris throughout the whole of the terrible day and night of St. Bartholomew. He saw the first act in the great tragedy. He saw the platform erected in the front of Nôtre Dame for the marriage ceremony, and the altar blazing with gold and tapers, the gorgeously-robed priests, the unwilling bride in her shining dress, and the sullen bridegroom. He saw the feasting, and the revelry, and the crowds of going and coming guests on the grand staircase. He saw the bride led forth to dance, trembling even while she trod her bridal measure, for she had gained some half knowledge of what was

about to happen; and this daughter of the Valois, in whom all womanly feeling was not extinct, had clung to her mother and prayed for mercy.

At night, Sidney must have been awakened by cries and the clash of arms in the streets. Perhaps he may have thought it some new marriage pageant; but on going to the window he must quickly have found out the hideous truth. When the first terrible surprise was over no doubt he and the other English gentlemen—his companions—were half inclined to rush down to the help of their Protestant brethren. But it would have been a worse than useless waste of life to have left the safe shelter of the English Embassy, merely to be overpowered by numbers and cut down in the darkness. They were therefore forced to content themselves with cursing priestly power, and thanking God that England was—what she was.

Sidney's stay in Paris seems for a time somewhat to have sickened him of the course of public life he had begun. He separated himself from his companions, and went for a long continental tour. At Frankfort he became acquainted with Languet, a well-known learned man of that day, who used his talents chiefly in writing on the liberal side of the great religious question that then agitated all Europe. The grave cast of both their minds quickly drew Sidney and Languet towards each other, and before long a firm bond was woven between them. There are few prettier things in the annals of friendship than the anxious care shown by the elderly scholar for the young Englishman in certain Latin letters that he afterwards wrote to him.

Another friend made by Sidney while he was abroad was William the Silent, Prince of Orange. We can fancy the loving reverence with which young Philip must have looked into the face of the great chief of Protestantism, the man with the large heart, who pleaded for the very assassins that sought his life; the man who, standing alone in his grey worsted jerkin in the midst of his people, was more entire ruler over his free subjects than was the King of France in velvet and ermine hedged round by his body-guard. The high opinion conceived by the Prince of Orange of Philip Sidney is evinced by his sending a special message a little while after to Elizabeth, advising her to employ him in some mission of importance.

After having travelled through Germany and part of Italy, Sidney at length returned home. He was well received by the Queen, who however, kept him for some little time dawdling about at her court, as it was her wont to do with most of the men in turns that served her. He fretted a little at this forced inaction; but still this court of Elizabeth was a place where a young man might well linger without weariness for awhile. There were Raleigh and Bessie Throgmorton whispering in passages and by-corners; anywhere, in fact, where the Queen could not see them; and when his Bessie was gone (called away

by the often somewhat imperious voice of her mistress), there was Raleigh himself, full of his grand dreams about that wonderful new land of America, where each flower was a marvel, and the rivers were seas, and the virgin silver glimmered in the mine. There was Mary Bridges, her eyes and her wit all alight. There was Elizabeth Vernon, glowing like a rose-garden, if Southampton turned his looks towards her. There was Burghley with whom to discuss kingcraft, and Bacon with whom to talk philosophy.

By-and-by Elizabeth sent Philip Sidney again abroad on some negotiation connected with the German Protestants. In this business his friend Languet was a great help to him. He performed his mission well, and came home with honour. Soon after his return, however, he fell into temporary disgrace with the Queen, for counselling her to give up the French marriage, which was still on the cards. Sidney had many reasons for doing this. He had seen enough of the Valois at home to be certain that such a union, in a domestic point of view, would be an unhappy one for Elizabeth. His pride as an Englishman revolted at the thought of seeing a French prince in the palace of his Queen. Besides, he doubted the political expedience of such an alliance. We believe that in her inmost heart Elizabeth fully agreed with Sidney on all these points, and that in reality she never seriously thought of the French match. But throughout her life it amused her and tickled her vanity to have various protracted matrimonial schemes in hand; and, moreover, she did not choose that this boy, Philip Sidney, handsome and clever though he were, should presume to advise her; indeed, she often would not bear such conduct from her oldest counsellors. She therefore gave him a few sharp words, and dismissed him from her presence for awhile.

Sidney retired to Wilton, the home of his sister Mary, now Countess of Pembroke. There he spent what were, perhaps, the happiest six months of his life. Lady Pembroke was a woman of high cultivation and most refined tastes. Philip quickly slipped with her into literary pursuits, and forgot the kings and kingdoms of the earth.

With Mary's delicate ear ready to give judgment on every sentence, with her sympathetic eyes ready to read every page, he wrote his "Arcadia." It is a prose romance, full of the highest moral teaching, and adorned with much bright imagination and airy fancy. It would be looked upon as very dull reading in our day, but it was exactly the sort of writing that was fashionable in Sidney's time.

Sidney never finished the "Arcadia." His own estimation of it was so humble that before his death he said he hoped it would be destroyed.

But his sister, in whose possession it was, could not bear to part with so dear a relic. Sidney had written it for her, and given it to her,

and as his gift she kept it. It was thus preserved, and has come down to us as a monument of a noble nature and a high intellect.

But to return to Philip Sidney himself. The Queen soon recalled him to court. He was Leicester's nephew, and she could never long be angry with anyone connected with sweet Robin. Sidney soon fully re-established himself in the royal favour by writing a mask called "The Lady of the May" in the Queen's honour. A little while after Elizabeth knighted him, and he became Sir Philip.

The story of Sidney's heart is thought by some to be very perplexing. It can, however, we think, be read in a perfectly simple and natural way.

His first boyish love was, we believe, given to Lady Penelope Devereux, the daughter of Lord Essex. She was beautiful and highly gifted. The parents of both sides liked the match. But as he grew older, Sidney held back. Time went on. Penelope's father died, and when he was dying said that he wished his daughter to be given to Philip Sidney. Still Philip did not speak the decisive words that would have gained for him his bride. The true cause of this unaccountable hesitation was, we believe, that he had begun to see flaws in Penelope's character. Another motive, doubtless, was that he had met Fanny Walsingham. Penelope was more beautiful than Fanny, but in Fanny was the truer metal; that was the greater charm in Sidney's eyes. Penelope's relations grew tired at length of waiting and married her to Lord Rich, an old man she did not love. Sidney was, doubtless, not sorry that the question was thus settled for him and Fanny Walsingham soon became Lady Sidney.

Penelope's future story proved that Sidney had judged her but too well; but when we blame Lady Rich, the faithless wife, the lover of unscrupulous Mountjoy, we must remember that against her will she was given to a man who had not a fragment of her heart.

Though his passion for Penelope was dead, a perfume of sentiment seems always to have hung for Sidney round his old love. It was the fashion of the time for poets to pay certain ladies the compliment of addressing to them their rhymes and sonnets. The woman thus honoured was never the woman that they really loved. This fact was well known in society in those days. With something of the past still lingering in his heart, Philip Sidney paid Lady Rich this sort of courteous homage, and celebrated her in his verse as Stella. It must be remembered that when Sidney did this, Lady Rich had not sunk so low as she afterwards did. His conduct in this respect could never have cost Lady Sidney a single prick of jealousy, for she was, of course, used to the customs of her time on this point.

Philip Sidney began after awhile to grow weary of inaction. He had, it is true, new and dear home ties, but his nature was essentially energetic. He was not the man to lie all his life at his wife's feet. S

Francis Drake was just about to start for an expedition to the West Indies. Sidney resolved to accompany him, and went to Plymouth to join the fleet. Lady Sidney no doubt understood her husband's character, and, like the brave, good woman that she was, made no sign whatever of what was in her heart. Before, however, Sidney could embark, he was stopped by the Queen's command. What induced this sudden capricious order it is impossible to say. Perhaps Leicester, who had a strong affection for his nephew, and who may have feared for him the dangers of the long voyage, influenced Elizabeth in this matter. We may well believe that Sir Philip returned home in no very amiable frame of mind, and that, even-tempered man though he was in general, Lady Sidney had for some months not exactly a pleasant time of it. A little daughter, however, came by-and-by to cheer the pair. The Queen stood godmother to her, and showered other honours on Sidney, who knew well enough that she was in reality a true friend, with all her whims; and by degrees the shadow of discontent passed away from his spirit. Lord Leicester was about to start for Holland as commander-in-chief of the English army, which was going thither to support the Protestant cause. This time Sidney was not kept at home. He went with his uncle, and was made Governor of Flushing, where his wife joined him.

Sidney, always earnest in everything that he had in hand, wanted at once to begin military operations. Leicester, however, loitered receiving here a complimentary address, presiding there at a state banquet, and otherwise sunning himself in the light of his own greatness. At length hostilities began, and Sir Philip Sidney, with a body of English troops under his command, besieged Zutphen. One day the English, led by their young general in person, made a gallant charge beneath the fire of the enemy's guns. A ball struck Sidney, breaking his thigh, and he fell from his horse. Even then his beautiful, unselfish nature asserted itself over physical pain; for as they bore him to the rear, he sent a cup of water, that was being held to his own parched lips, to a dying common soldier. For some days he lingered, his mind so clear and active that he dictated as he lay there a touching little poem, his heart by turns rising in humble faith to God, and going out in love to those who watched around him. When the end was very near, and he could not speak, they asked him to give some sign that he was of good courage. Sidney clasped his hands upon his breast. So went to his God one of England's noblest Christian gentlemen.

ALICE KING.

THROUGH WIND AND RAIN.

By Mary Cecil Hay, Author of "Old Myddelton's Money."

YES, that's the portrait of the present Squire. Handsome? No; I don't think we old servants ever call him handsome. I daresay you are right, though, and if we'd known him *less*, we might have spoken of his being handsome. *We* only know him as the kindest master and the tenderest son in all the world. Yet I daresay you are right, for when I'm here by myself among the portraits (the servants wondering why their old housekeeper wanders over the house so much alone) it is always to *his* face I turn with the best memories, and there is nothing then to dim my spectacles, as there is when my eyes rest upon the portraits opposite—you see them? the portraits of his father and grandfather.

It was just such a night as this that ushered in the new year five-and-twenty years ago; and even now, that evening is as clear in my memory as this has been, though Wesmede to-day is filled with guests and gaiety, and the old house echoes music and laughter, instead of that one strange cry.—*Promised* to tell you, did I? Come nearer to the fire then, and throw on another log. Many a night I've sat just here, to see the old year die. Sometimes in that wonderful silence of the starshine; sometimes in brilliant moonlight, when that line of heath road beyond the park lay like a broad white ribbon on the brown; and sometimes, as it does to-night—and did upon that other night just five-and-twenty years ago—panting for its breath and dying in passionate tears. You can see now how the poplars, far away against the sky there, bend like reeds; and when the hurrying clouds fly by and leave the young moon uncovered, you can trace that bridle path across the heath, glistening like a shallow brook. Just such a night as this it was, wild, wet, and gusty, when the old Squire and I stood watching——

But how's this? I ought not to be in the middle of my story before begin. Let me see—there's another New Year's Eve that I can remember, fifty years ago, when the Squire held his new-born infant in his arms, with such a smile as we had never seen upon his face before, and stood there in a dream, until they roused him to tell him that his young wife could not live.

All in all, was the boy to his father from that very night, yet at first there was sometimes a fancy among us that our master's great affection for his son came second to his pride in his heir. He was growing old, you see, and of course there must have been times when he had feared

that the proud old name would die, and the place he loved so well go to that distant branch of the Capletons, of which Captain Warder was the living representative—a cold, middle-aged man, whom the old Squire never had liked. But now that the son and heir was born, Mr. Capleton (with some new feeling) turned round and seemed to grow fond of this heir presumptive—as they called him. But *we* didn't, and there was a conviction among us that whenever he came to Wesmede it was because he either wanted money in a hurry, or had nowhere else to go.

For years after the little heir was born, Captain Warder didn't come to Wesmede at all. He might have been too angry, or he might have been really abroad, as it was reported. But gradually his visits were resumed, and then, year by year, they grew longer and more frequent.

At Wesmede everything went smoothly and happily for the Squire through his son's boyhood; for though of course Mr. Will got into trouble sometimes, as schoolboys will, the troubles never lasted; for the boy was gentle and true-hearted, even if he *had* a share of his father's self-will. So the time went on, until within a few days of Mr. Will's leaving college—when he was to come home for a few weeks, then join a party of friends, and travel for a year, before settling at Wesmede and taking the Squire's duties upon himself. Just as we were dreading lest Mr. Capleton should fret through his son's long absence, a distant connection of his died, leaving an only daughter unprovided for. So the Squire, when he heard this, went off at once to Scotland, and brought back the orphan girl with him.

Her portrait here? Of course it is, for she was one of the Capletons, you know, though she was so poor that I've seen her turn the bows of ribbon on her dress, and patch the pages of her music. Beautiful? I don't know, because I've heard so many different faces called beautiful. At first the servants called her "puny;" then I noticed that the maids grew to imitate her, and dropped their voices when they spoke of her. As for me, from the very first moment that my eyes rested on her, I saw what won my heart. Her face was narrow and delicate, yet there was a sweet and steadfast light upon it which made it beautiful beyond what I had ever before understood of the word.

How well I remember the day Mr. Will came home from college and found her standing shyly at his father's side waiting for him. Such a glance came into his eyes that, though I'd known them all his life, I felt I'd never seen them properly till then. Of course I could only guess how he spent that evening, the first through which he had ever had a girl companion at home; but before a week had passed, I had seen what made me sad enough.

"If Agnes does her duty, Will," I heard the Squire say one morning, while Mr. Will stood against the low oak chimney-piece in the hall,

with his face bent, "I shall give her a wedding portion, and marry her to Warder. I shall be doing both of them a good turn. And that reminds me, Will, Luxleigh tells me his daughter returns from Paris next year, to take her place at the head of his house."

No answer from Mr. Will, but the Squire didn't notice it, and went on in a pleasant, satisfied tone.

"I've never kept you in the dark as to my intentions, Will, have I? You've always been fully aware of the good fortune in store for you. Luxleigh's estate and Luxleigh's daughter go together, and the prize is to be yours on your return; always supposing, Will, that you act your own part like a gentleman and—a lover."

"And if I don't?"

The Squire's laugh rang out with a merriment which had not a grain of suspicion in it. "If you lose your reason during the next year—put it that way, Will." When Mr. Will looked up, I was passing him, in leaving the hall, and I remember wondering how it was the Squire could be so unsuspecting. When I reached my own room, still thinking over that expression on my young master's face, I found Miss Agnes standing at the window, looking out into the park as she waited for me. When we had held our usual morning discussion, she turned to the window again before leaving the room.

"If you are looking for Mr. Will, Miss Agnes," said I, standing with my back to her, and speaking easily what, with my old-fashioned notions, I fancied it would be wise to say, "he's in the hall. The master has been talking to him of his wedding with Miss Luxleigh. I was re-arranging the curtains, and the master told me not to go, so I heard them."

She was facing me now, innocently and wistfully meeting my eyes, so my next words almost choked me.

"For years this has been an understood thing, Miss Agnes—did you never hear it? You see the Luxleigh property touches Wesmede north, south, and east. Of course it will be a wise marriage."

She was looking at me still, and the old light was within her eyes, and the gentle smile upon her lips; but oh, the whiteness of her face!

"I dare say, Miss Agnes," said I, bending over my fire, "that you had never even heard of it."

"Not—yet."

When she went away from the room so quietly, of course I wished I hadn't said a word; but still I'd done it with the fancy that it might be kinder to do it at once. Somehow it never seemed to enter the Squire's head that there could be danger to his plans in the close intimacy between his son and Miss Agnes; or in the charm to Mr. Will of such a sweet girl-companion in the home in which he'd never known a mother or a sister. As for Mr. Will, I don't think he ever even *tried*

to feel that Miss Agnes was like a sister to him, for from the first he had loved her as brothers don't love; and—yes, after all these years I can say it as confidently as I said it then—firmly as Mr. Capleton's heart was set upon that projected marriage for his son, everything would have ended happily for Miss Agnes and Mr. Will, if it had not been for Captain Warder. No; even yet I cannot tell *how*, but I feel as sure of it as I am that that's the wind, sobbing on its way across the heath.

When the day came for Mr. Will to leave home, no-one saw his parting with Miss Agnes, but two hours after I had watched the carriage out of sight, I found her standing at the window with her eyes fixed on the spot where it had disappeared; and though they were filled with tears, I never saw that trustful look upon her face *so* trustful as it was at that minute.

I think that Miss Agnes had made a determination that, as far as she possibly could, she would be both son and daughter to Mr. Capleton in his son's absence; and it was prettier than any picture to see them together—always together. She would walk with him round the estate, discussing alterations and improvements just as his son would have done; his arm in hers, and always the brightest interest in her face. She would drive him for hours among his tenants, remembering everything for him, and doing as much, in her gentle quiet way, to win their hearts as he could do with all the wealth and power. She would ride beside him into Exeter on his weekly visits, and the two horses, by force of habit, kept so closely together that it became a proverb there. She would go with him to the heavy county dinners, leaning on his arm as his own daughter would have done, and so grateful to him for her plain white dress (and making so much of it in her pleasant way) that often when I've watched them off, my eyes have been too full to meet hers—the idea of it! Tears, because she loved the old man so well.

But best of all was it to see them together through those long winter evenings at home, when she would sing to him, read to him, talk to him—ah, well, it is such a nature as hers, I think, that can make *home* for a man, in its highest and holiest sense.

For many weeks after Mr. Will left us, Captain Warder did not show himself at Wesmede, and when he came at last, walking quietly and undemonstratively through the little eastern door, it wasn't very wonderful that none of us could suspect, or be guarded against, the misery he brought. After that first visit, others followed rapidly; and I understood very well how the Squire, having planned that marriage between Captain Warder and Miss Agnes, should be very willing to throw them together.

But still Miss Agnes avoided him whenever she could; and once when I asked her (just for no purpose at all) which of her cousins she

liked best, the rush of pink to her face, and the trembling of her lip when she said "one was all truth and honour"—and then failed for words—was proof enough that she had sounded Captain Warder's nature.

Gradually, during those visits of Captain Warder's to Wesmede there came a consciousness of something being wrong. I don't suppose I can make you understand, for I couldn't understand it myself but all the peaceful calm of the old house seemed ruffled, and not only did we see that the Squire had grown suspicious of his adopted daughter, but we noticed that in every word he uttered of his absent son his voice had a fretfulness which I had never heard in it before. Quite sure I felt that Captain Warder's influence was effecting this change, but I could never have fully comprehended it if I had not once chanced to overhear him speaking unrestrainedly. The master had sent for me to the library to check some bills for him, and while I did it Captain Warder came in, bringing two foreign letters which he had called for in Exeter; thinking—so he said—to please his cousin by anticipating next morning's post. The master's eyes brightened at sight of his son's hand; but, with a slow smile—I remember thinking it the ugliest smile I ever saw—Captain Warder laid upon the Squire's letter one addressed in the same hand to Miss Agnes.

"Well?" questioned Mr. Capleton.

"May I hear, before I deliver this, of my cousin Will's health and welfare?" asked Captain Warder, putting his arm through the Squire's and sauntering with him into the next room, Miss Agnes' letter in one hand. I didn't pretend to go on with my figures, for every word they uttered reached me through the curtains, and presently I understood well enough *who* was making Mr. Will's absence fatal to the dear old home. From that very hour the end followed so naturally, in spite of its misery, that I seemed to have been expecting it all just as it came.

That very night, when I was sitting alone in my room, fancying the whole household was in bed, my door was softly opened, and Miss Agnes came in in her white dress, far more like a ghost than—— She came in, I say, almost without a sound, and dropped upon her knees at my side just as she might have done if I had been her mother, and she—broken-hearted. I couldn't say a word; I only put my hands upon her soft dark hair, and tried to keep back the tears; old women are so silly with their tears.

"This is good-bye," she said presently, raising her white face; and at that moment the steadfast light within her eyes was sad to see. "*Good-bye.* This dear life is over for me—from to-night."

"My dear," I cried, as I took both her chilly hands in mine, "what is it that you mean, Miss Agnes?"

"I am—going." Her voice sank to a very whisper at the last word,

so no wonder I could not feel sure I had heard aright. Yet not for anything could I ask her again, because I seemed to understand it all so well, after those suspicions of Captain Warder's which I had overheard.

"I am going—to-morrow," she whispered, her wide eyes meeting mine with an unuttered longing in them. "I am going because—my uncle has lost—his trust in me. He thinks I would ruin—his son's—life. *I* ruin it! I have an old friend who will receive me—I think. She is poor, but I—will help her. I—need not be—a burden."

"Where is she, Miss Agnes?"

But no, not by hinting, or asking, or even entreating, could I win that information. She would not leave me the power of telling Mr. Will where she was gone.

"But tell him," she whispered, very softly, "please tell him—only this one thing; that kneeling here, just as I might have knelt at my own mother's side, I pray that he will do as his father wishes. I shall be quite happy—presently. His father has been as my father, and I have no word to say to-night, or ever, but—God bless him."

I don't know whether I answered at all; I fancy not; but I held her to my breast and—well, never mind that.

Strange to say, it was on the very next morning, just before Miss Agnes left us, that Lord Luxleigh brought his daughter to Wesmede; then of course I guessed that both my master and Captain Warder had been yesterday aware of her return. I was lingering with Miss Agnes in the hall—just making tasks to keep me beside her—when the two young ladies met. I was a poor judge of course, but I did think that the frail, sad girl, who was going alone into the world for the sake of Mr. Will, was far better worth his love than the girl who, with her foreign voice and dress and manners, was come to win what my dear was resigning. Quite courteously the Squire introduced his young cousin to Miss Luxleigh, but somehow his voice sounded all different.

Ah! how the minutes fled till she was gone, then how they crept by us, bringing us never the music of a girlish voice and willing step; bringing us even no word from the outer world to tell us of her. Though I could see that the Squire missed her more than words could say, he never even uttered her name. Captain Warder did wisely not to leave him alone just then, knowing what the empty rooms would be for him, after the bright companionship of his adopted daughter. The intercourse between Luxleigh and Wesmede became very close. Perhaps Miss Luxleigh enjoyed the Squire's perpetual narratives of his son's perfections, and perhaps adulation of every kind was welcome to her. In any case she came very frequently to Wesmede, and so aided Captain Warder's attempt to keep Mr. Capleton from being solitary.

So the time went on till Mr. Will's return. Of course I know nothing of what passed in that first interview between the father and son, but

I happened to meet my young master on the stairs just afterward and he passed me without a word or glance, his eyes burning, and hi lips drawn tight upon his teeth. Later on, when I was tired of hearin him pacing to and fro in his own room, I ventured quietly in to hin to give him the welcome I'd always given in old times when he ha come home from school or college. At first I thought he was going t turn away from me, but quite suddenly (as if he remembered that hi secret lay in my keeping) he turned and greeted me. It was a goo while, though, before I trusted myself to give him Miss Agnes' message and almost as soon as ever I had repeated it—he, standing in utte stillness to listen—the door opened, and Captain Warder came in witl his greeting; a greeting far too loud and cordial to be quite hones from him.

Mr. Will looked down with silent contempt upon his cousin' outstretched hand, then he turned to me as if he were not even awar that anyone else stood there. "Old friend," he said, "I am goin away again, to fetch my cousin Agnes back to Wesmede; so you se I must answer your welcome by another good-bye."

I was looking straight into Captain Warder's face, but I could no find out whether his surprise was real or feigned. "Your father foun himself deceived in Agnes Capleton," he said, "and naturally he wil never consent to her return here."

Shall I ever forget my young master's fierce reply, or the savag gloom of Captain Warder's face when he left the room?

Mr. Will had a long interview with his father after that; and from what he told me afterwards, when he came to see if I could help hin by the faintest clue to Miss Agnes' present home, I understood that my master had said if he could not return to marry Miss Luxleigh he need never return at all, and had strictly forbidden him to bring Miss Agnes to Wesmede. From that—even without being told—I could guess that Captain Warder had been present at the interview in spite of Mr. Will's earnest wish to see his father alone; but I did not wonder the father should fear trusting to himself this refusal of his son's anxious prayer.

Not for months after Mr. Will's departure, did the Squire betray any symptom of having taken to heart the defeat of his scheme or the absence of his son; and so the people grew to say he didn't care, and that Captain Warder was as good as any son to him; but I knew better. Sometimes, wandering to his door late in the night to be sure that all was well, I would hear the old man weeping like a girl; and a year afterwards I found those letters of Mr. Will's, which were never answered, worn to shreds, as a century could not have worn themhad they lain in the Squire's desk instead of—where they *did* lie.

As time went on, and the old Squire's strength and spirit gradually failed him, he grew to lean more and more upon me; a sure sign that

his hard resolves were outliving his physical strength. But no wonder, for those resolves were constantly propped by crafty words and deeds of apparent devotion from the one enemy of all his good and kindly impulses. Just as if she understood the state of the case, Miss Luxleigh left off coming to Wesmede; and this served Captain Warder for another argument against Mr. Will; as I knew, because I was so often with my master now. He had grown so to depend upon my always being ready to his call that I heard the tales Captain Warder brought of Mr. Will's past life; stories, whether true or false, which he had simply raked up to widen the present breach, and which fulfilled their purpose with a cruel success. If I could by any means have discovered where Mr. Will was, all this time, I would myself have written him an entreaty to return and put an end to this misery; but I have shown you where those unanswered letters lay, and now they had ceased altogether. Never had the Squire let anyone look upon these, and Captain Warder's poison had done its work so well, that the very mention of Mr. Will's name now was enough to throw my master into a state of suppressed passion which was most dangerous for him in his enfeebled condition. At last, one day—nearly a year had passed since Mr. Will followed Miss Agnes from Wesmede, and though Captain Warder had heard of their marriage, he said, we did not know whether to believe it or not—the Squire's lawyers came over from Exeter, in a dogcart which Captain Warder had driven in, and spent a long day at Wesmede closeted with Mr. Capleton, whose raised unsteady tones reached me often as I passed the library door. There were many surmises among the servants as to the business in hand, but I never had a doubt at all; and when I went into the master's room at night (as I always did now, inventing some excuse or other just to see him the last thing, for I pitied him for the sore companion he had in his unquiet conscience), and he bid me wait a few minutes, I knew quite well what he was going to tell me. My guess was right. Squire Capleton had made a new will that day, disinheriting his only son, and leaving the whole of his property to Captain Warder, who was to assume the old name when he took possession of Wesmede. I stood near my master's chair, listening while he told me all this, and my lips seemed glued together; for if any sound had escaped them just then, it would have been a cry of anger which would have shut out from me my master's confidence for ever.

"You hear?" he questioned, sharply, when he had finished; and I thought there was a great eagerness in his sunken eyes—a great eagerness to hear *some one* say he had done right.

"I hear, sir," I said, when I could speak quietly and without exciting him, "but it signifies little to any of us. It isn't very likely we old servants will stay at Wesmede to see Captain Warder take our young master's place; or bear our old master's name to make it hated."

He turned to me, but his anger was too fierce to be more than i stantaneous, and then there dawned upon his poor weak face a pitifi questioning. "I've done the only thing I could have done—the on thing," he said, his voice rising. "You are a silly, prejudiced woma faithful as far as a woman's nature can go, but silly and prejudice Go to bed."

After that I threw away all fear of my old master, and talked to hi daringly, often and often and often, both of his son and Miss Agne You see I could do them no harm then. He had done his worst. H could not either make them unhappier, or leave them more destitut so I had no longer any fear for the effect of those words which wou rise hotly and anxiously to my lips. Sometimes he was almost patie with me, and would only murmur the old reply, which he always utter so very slowly, "I am glad I did it—very glad I did it."

But at other times he would loudly and fretfully silence me, orderi me from his presence. Yet—and this was sad even to me, because so plainly betrayed his growing weakness—he would summon me aga almost immediately, and presently would once more repeat the o assurance, which it was so plain to see *he* could not believe, repeat as constantly as he might.

As the winter closed in, Captain Warder hardly left him. Perha even *he* could see now that the hard spirit was wearing out, as well as t thin bent form, and he feared more than ever to remove his influen Day by day now my master clung more closely to his old servants, a he fretted so when I left him, that I got into the habit of bringing r work and my accounts to his room quite naturally; then of reading him, as if that had always been a part of my day's work; and bringi him messages from the tenants; and of getting somehow to make h feel it natural to listen to me while he rested. Then you may be su I let him feel what his people would think if (I never made it *wh* they were to have, for their master and their landlord, a man wh they had always honestly disliked, as they had always honestly d liked Captain Warder. But though in time all this grew natural to the Squire would never let me utter two sentences together of M Will's return, or of forgiveness for him and Miss Agnes. At last t day came round—Mr. Will's birthday, and the last day of that y which had been so wretched for us all. The Squire had been so r less and ill the day before, that I had sat up in his room all night, a I remember noticing with what a start he rose from his pillows whe let in the daylight, asking me sharply what day it was. Standing bes him—and I know I must have looked as anxious as I felt—I told h And then I gently led him on to recall those happy birthdays Mr. W had always spent at home; going back even to that one when he h taken his baby as a New Year's gift from Heaven. Quite silently e listened to me, but his weak white fingers were pressed upon his ey

"O, master," I cried, folding my hands just as if I cried to my Master in Heaven, "forgive him, and bring him home once more."

Through all its pain, his face darkened with a great anger when I spoke, and he sent me from him as he had so often done before. But when I returned I found him sitting at the window in the feeble winter sunshine, looking himself more feeble than I had ever seen him look before, but with a gentleness in face and attitude which almost frightened me by its strong contrast to the passionate vehemence with which he had dismissed me an hour before.

"Hester," he said, calling me by the name he had been used to call me when I was a young girl about the house, learning from my mother how to take her place (the place I've filled for fifty years), "Hester, perhaps he will come to-day."

I had the hardest work in the world to prevent doing something foolish in my joy at hearing only those few words. To think that at last he should, of his own accord, and so gently, speak of Mr. Will's return! Ah, if it could but happen on that very day—that birthday which they had always spent together!

"No, no," said the Squire, sharply, guessing my motive, when I, in trembling anxiety, asked if he knew where Mr. Will would be this day. "No, no; and if I knew a hundred times you should not send."

But afterwards, as he still sat quietly beside the window, he spoke to me quite gently now and then, as if he read my thoughts while I sa working opposite him.

"Yes; he may come to-day—by his own wish. If not—never mind—never mind."

Then, as time went on: "Warder was right; he never meant to return. He was glad to break the old ties—irksome ties; and he and Agnes tired of them. Never mind—never mind."

"Perhaps," said I, with a sudden boldness, as unexpected by myself as by my master, "Mr. Will is too poor to travel now."

The Squire started forward on his chair, looking into my face with a new anguish; but the next moment he had sunk back again, and was murmuring softly to himself once more, "Pooh, pooh! Warder knew he borrowed money; he had no difficulty in doing that. My old age and my failing health made it easy for my heir to borrow. No; he had no difficulty. Warder heard of it all. Those men do not guess of my new will, though. Well, they deserve to suffer, for lending money to a rebellious son—a disobedient son. It is a just will, and Warder has promised that, in my place, he will do all that—my son has left undone. Yes, it is a just will."

Yet for all the reiterated words, it was plain to see that that will lay heavily upon my poor master's heart.

"Hester," he said once, looking wistfully at me in the waning after

noon light, "if he comes—to-day. If—loving the old times—he comes to me upon his birthday, to begin the new year with his hand in mine, I shall burn the will I made in my anger. If he does not, I shall know that all is best as it is."

Can any words describe the eagerness with which I watched that line of road across the heath, sitting motionless in my intense anxiety, and praying silently from my heart? But the daylight waned, and neither a carriage nor a solitary figure broke that line of bleak road which ended on the horizon.

"Leave them," said the Squire, almost roughly staying my hand, as I attempted to close the shutters when the world was all in darkness, "leave them until this day—and this old year—are dead."

The physician, who came over every day from Exeter, tried his best to woo my master from the gloom, saying, when he found all other attempts fail, that he wanted to dine with him beside the fire. But no, my master only shook his head gravely, and said he had a fancy for that seat to-night; and that his eyes were tired, and he did not need the light. So at last the physician went away, seeing he was useless, but he said he should return early in the morning, for he himself had been alarmed by the change this one day had made in Mr. Capleton, though he evidently saw no immediate danger. He thought it a pity that Captain Warder should happen to be away for that night, and I did not of course tell him how glad I was.

When I returned to my master's room, the firelight showed me his chair empty at the uncurtained window; and I was looking round in real alarm when he entered from the library. As he came forward, I saw that he carried a sealed packet, and my heart beat with joy when, with it in his hand, he came towards the fire.

"Oh, master, yes," I cried involuntarily, when he paused, "burn it to-night."

He closed his long weak fingers over it. "If he comes," he whispered, huskily, "I shall burn it. That will be my birthday gift to my repentant boy. If not—it is a just will—quite just, and it shall stand."

I saw it would be best to say no other word. His own longing to destroy the will was as strong as any persuasions could be, and I saw that there was *no* power which could urge him to it except his son's return—my poor, poor master!

So again we sat and watched, looking out into the darkness; and when the faintest sound broke the stillness, I could see, in the fire-light, how my master started forward in his chair, his great hope hurrying his breath. Strange to say, as the darkness deepened, his confidence seemed to grow only the stronger and more steadfast, until at last, by its very simplicity as well as force, it had inspired in me a confidence just as strong.

The weather had been fine all day, though the wind was high; and there had been fitful gleams of sunshine falling upon my master's old, worn face, like the angel-touches falling now upon his heart. But after the sun had set, the weather changed, and each gust of wind sent noisy splashes of rain against the uncovered window panes. But, through all the dreariness of the night and the rain and the darkness, we sat on; watching without seeing, and listening intently for *one* sound which yet never *could* have been heard above the roar of the wind.

Once, during that long watch, I was summoned downstairs. I stood for a few minutes in the brightly-lighted kitchen, giving the orders which the servants needed, and after that glare the darkness of the Squire's room struck heavily upon my heart; but saddest of all was it to see the new attitude of eager expectancy in which I found him now. He was leaning forward on the arms of his chair, and he did not turn his face from the window even while he spoke to me in a low, hurried voice: "The moon has risen. Come quickly, Hester. When this cloud has passed we shall see the road across the heath. Wait! wait! It lay just now almost as clearly as in daylight. The clouds are heavy, but after each passes we shall see. There! there!"

He had risen from his chair. With the hand which held the sealed packet, he leaned against the window, with the other he shaded his eyes to peer forth into the night. The moonlight showed me this, and nothing more, till he dropped his hand from his face and seized my arm.

"See! it is like daylight. Does he come?"

That road across the heath lay wet and clear and glistening, just as we have seen it lie to-night; and my younger, stronger eyes searched the spot where my master's eyes were fixed; yet it was *his* cry of joy which first broke the silence.

"There! there!" he cried, and I, trembling so that I could scarcely stand, tried to give shape to that gliding shadow on the straight, wet road.

"I see, I see," my master whispered, his thin form heaving with an almost terrible emotion, "he—is come."

"I cannot see," I said, only because I so dreaded a disappointment for him now.

"Not see?" he questioned, turning to me with a gentle perplexed smile. "Go, Hester, and make sure that the fire is burning brightly in his room; and have Rollo unchained and brought into the house. It will make the faithful old dog young again to see the master he loves. Let the whole house be ready to welcome him. Let his rooms look just as they used to look. They cannot be too bright to-night. Make haste, because he comes so quickly."

It was well that those hungry clouds had hidden the moon again, for I could not keep the tears away; and, in the midst of his eager joy, my master would have been hurt to see them.

"He comes on horseback, Hester. Have his horse well cared for. It will need rest after having come so fast—you saw how fast he flew, didn't you?" My master was walking with me towards the door as he hurried through these loving orders, and the packet was tightly grasped in his hand.

"You will burn it now, sir? You will destroy it before I bring up my young master?"

"No," he said, a shadow falling over his eager white face, as he nervously changed the will from hand to hand, "I must see his face and hear his voice; then it shall flame to ashes. Hark!"

The quick, bright word, and my master's sudden pause with outstretched hands and uplifted head, stopped me on my way; and so I was still standing beside him, in a gleam of brightest moonlight, when Mr. Will came in; and that cry from his father's lips made me reel blindly for one moment.

I saw that my young master had come straight and hurriedly there, for the rain was thick upon his hair and dress, and the hand he gave me, when his father released it, was wet and cold. Seeing this, I was hastening to his room that he might find a bright fire there (though there was little fear, for I had had the room ready all that day), when my master called me back.

"Stay, Hester," he said, in a new bright tone, "you deserve to see this burnt. It is all over now. See!"

He dropped the sealed packet into the very heart of the hot wide fire, and now sat watching it crumble into ashes, while his face had a smile upon it which was almost radiant in its ease and happiness. Mr. Will stood watching too, but very gravely, and when presently every trace of the paper had disappeared, he dropped upon his knees beside his father's chair, and, with his face hidden, sobbed just three words as I pray I may never hear man sob again:

"Father, forgive me!"

The words were stopped upon his lips by the old man's loving fingers. "It is I, Will—it is I who need forgiveness. But this is forgiveness. God will pardon us both, and no one again can separate us."

I had softly closed the door upon them then, and for a long while lingered in Mr. Will's rooms, giving them all the homeliness I could. Then I went down with orders for the young master's supper. It hardly surprised me to find that the servants in the house did not know he had arrived, for I knew that if they had seen him they would have taken his wet coat. There was quite a shout of joy when I told them my news, and some of them followed me to the master's door that they might be first to greet Mr. Will. They stood back quietly for me to go in alone, but—ah me! my cry soon brought them.

There sat our master beside the glowing fire, with still that smile on

full content on his pale lips; but the lips were motionless for evermore, and he was all alone. Neither the glow of the fire, nor the moonlight shining in now unhindered, showed us any figure save that solitary sleeping one of our old master.

More to tell? very little; and how nervous it makes one, in this fitful moonlight and the rush of rain and wind, and with those weird flying shadows which the firelight throws upon the pictures. Surely you know the end as well as I do.

Not one of the servants, even the oldest among them, ever jested with me about my account of the young master's return in the dying of the old year; but I heard them whispering together afterwards, when I fell ill, that that strange dream of mine had warned them of an illness. Dream!

For days and weeks, and even months, Captain Warder carried on the fruitless search for Mr. Capleton's will, firmly convinced that the Squire himself must have removed it—his private bureau had a lettered lock which none but himself understood, and this was untouched at his death—only to place it in another hiding place. But the search was vain, and of course I had no tale to tell *him*.

But the search for Mr. Will was longer and more wearisome still, and the Squire had been two months dead, and Captain Warder was beginning to feel secure in the mastership at Wesmede, when the Exeter lawyers sent us word they had traced Mr. Capleton's heir. That very night they arrived at Wesmede in a postchaise, and brought my master's heir, lying asleep in his mother's arms. In a moment I recognised Miss Agnes, when she came into the hall shyly and sadly, in her heavy mourning, just as she had first come to us; and no voice was needed to tell any of us for whom she wore that widow's cap around her small sad face.

Ah! what a sad home-coming it was! Miss Agnes—it seemed so natural to have her back that I could not for a time get out of using the old name—tried very hard, as we could see, to shake off her weight of grief, but I did not wonder that for so long it was impossible to her.

During that wreck, on New Year's Eve, of the sailing vessel in which she and her husband and baby were coming from Australia, to plead in person for their father's pardon, she had been rescued with the other women and children sorely against her will, as she wished to stay beside her husband. But with tears and prayers he had urged her, assuring her there was chance for all, but only if she left him then. So he had seen her safe into the boat, and then had laboured to save others, until he and the captain were alone upon the deck of the sinking ship in which they had been homeward bound. One sailor, who was saved, had told her how he had seen Mr. Will at the last moment kneeling on the wet deck, himself wet through, his he

upon his folded arms; and how he had heard him sob three words – which might well have been the cry from every heart that night—"Father, forgive me"—and then gone down upon the broken ship.

And when Miss Agnes had told me this, with stiff white lips and tearless eyes which were almost proud in their great love, I found that I could tell her how my master had died on that New Year's Eve, with his hands upon his son's head, answering that very prayer with his own appeal for pardon. I remember how the light broke upon her pale face—just that steady, trustful light of old—when she heard how they were together at the very last; and though she said no word to me, I know to Whom she *did* breath grateful words.

Yes, that's her portrait: and if there's another lady in all the land better beloved than she has been for these five-and-twenty years through which she has lived among us at Wesmede, I should like to know where that lady's home may be.

Quite happy looking? indeed she is. Isn't it always a life which is lived for others that is the happiest of all? And would not the love of such a son crown any mother's life with blessing?

Yes; that's the present Squire. A handsome face you called it; but if you knew him as I know him, you would see far more than that; and when I look at the two portraits opposite I like to think how proud the old Squire and Mr. Will would have been to see how nobly he reigns here in their stead; while they—are resting.

SUNRISE AND SUNSET.

THE ruddy sunrise called to the sunset,
(Burning gold and violet,)
Sending his message by the op'ning rose,
And every air that blows,
"Turn thy bright footsteps to the summer moon,
"And meet me soon,—
"Aye, meet me, clasp me, kiss me, at mid-noon!"

So the fair sunset to the fresh sunrise
Turned her faint eyes,
Called back the colour to her fading face,
And spread her arms, and yearned to his embrace:
"It cannot be, my brother, O bright Day!
"There is no place in all the starry way,
"Where thou and I may meet,—warm life,—and wan decay

C. M. GEMMER (*Gerda Fay*).

MY AUNT'S LEGACY.

MY father is a farmer, in sufficiently easy though not exactly affluent circumstances; and he, with my mother and brothers, live in the house where all of us, except my mother, first saw the light. At the time when the event here recorded took place I lived with them, but I have been away from home for many a year now.

The house is a large, rambling building, constructed of red bricks, and abounding in numerous long, low rooms. We are simple, primitive people, and generally sit and take our meals in a room leading out of the kitchen. But we have two state parlours, which, in our eyes at least, are very grand, and which we use on those rare occasions when we wish to make a show in the eyes of the world; or rather in the eyes of those few and isolated members of it who, at long intervals, come our way.

My name is Sebastian Gregg Felton, and I am one of a family of five, all boys, in which I occupy the generally unenviable position of being in the middle. I say generally unenviable, because, as a rule, the eldest and youngest of a family get the best of it, and the others rather go to the wall. But in my case I had nothing to complain of, as I happened to be my mother's prime favourite.

Several reasons conspired to produce this result. To begin with, I had been a very delicate child, and great doubts had been entertained as to the possibility of rearing me. Children that cause most anxiety are generally liked best; and as I had rewarded my mother for all the care bestowed upon me by growing into a tall, broad-shouldered fellow, who seemed quite to have forgotten what ill health was, she naturally felt grateful to me, and inclined to think me a very meritorious character. Another thing that disposed her in my favour was that I had been infinitely more troublesome than all her other boys put together; as, whenever my health allowed it, I had been from my earliest infancy in some mischief or other; though, to do myself justice, I had never been guilty of anything mean or underhanded. There was one other circumstance that made me looked upon with favour, not only by my mother, but by the whole family as well: and that was that I was considered to have expectations. In other words, I was thought to have a very good chance of being heir to an aunt of my father's, who had a very comfortable little fortune of her own. But I will talk of this by-and-by, when I have told the reader a little more about myself.

At the time of this story I was four-and-twenty years old, six feet

high, broadly built enough to match my height, and—my native modesty recoils from writing this—very good-looking. In disposition I was lighthearted and fond of fun, my former leaning towards mischief having by no means deserted me.

Though but one-and-twenty, I had for some years been engaged to Claribel Myer, the daughter of a well-to-do miller who lived not very far from us. She was a pretty, lively little being, with dark hair and eyes, a roguish smile, and a sweet figure, and she was a great pet with everybody.

But to proceed to the more important part of my tale.

One evening, as we were all sitting at tea, the postman came to the door—in itself so unusual an event that it caused quite an excitement. There was a general rush to see what he had got, and I, being nearest, was out first and obtained the letter. It was addressed to my mother, and everybody was much interested in the opening and reading of it. It turned out to be from the aunt from whom I was supposed to have my expectations, and after whom I had received my beautiful second name of Gregg.

Here let me stop for a moment to inform the reader that our notion as to my chance was by no means unfounded. It did not arise from a general feeling of covetousness on our part, or from the idea that seems common in some families, that everyone is bound to leave them property. Shortly before I was born, Miss Gregg wrote to my father, saying that should the expected child prove a boy she would be much complimented if he would give it her name; and concluded with certain dark and somewhat mysterious hints which it seemed to him could bear but one interpretation. I need hardly observe that when I appeared, and turned out to be a boy, I was duly christened according to my aunt's wishes. She had never set eyes upon me, or indeed taken the slightest notice of me from that moment to this; but still the hope of expectations, if it burned rather dimly sometimes, never went out.

When it was discovered from whom the letter came, the excitement naturally increased greatly; and my mother's spectacles not being forthcoming quickly enough to suit the impatience of the company, as I was considered to have the greatest interest in the matter, and was also believed to be the best scholar in the family, the epistle was put into my hands, with an exhortation to read it aloud. I did so, and read as follows:—

"Dear Madam,—Your son, who bears my name, must by this time be pretty well, if not quite, grown up, and I have a fancy to see what he is like. With your permission I shall therefore come to your house on Friday next, and, also with your permission, will remain the night.

"I am, dear Madam, yours truly,

"Priscilla Gregg."

When I had finished the perusal, silence reigned for some time; everybody was too much astonished to speak. When they recovered themselves they all turned to me.

"Well, Sebastian," said my father, "this is a chance for you; mind you make the best of it."

"You know, Sebastian," chimed in one of my brothers, "you have a very pleasant way with old ladies when you choose, and now is the time for showing it."

"Yes, indeed," remarked my eldest brother; "it will all depend upon your pleasing her or not, whether you come in for the money."

"Of course Sebastian will please her," retorted my mother, taking my part against them. Then, not wishing to lose the opportunity of a little advice on her own account, she went on, "But do mind, Sebastian, that you are particularly nice to her, and very attentive and differential, and—— "

"Oh, please don't give me any more directions, mother," I answered, stopping my ears. "I shall get so confused, I shan't know what to do at all." So saying I left the room, and went to tell Claribel what was about to happen.

This important letter had come on a Wednesday. The day intervening between its arrival and my aunt's was spent by my mother in thoroughly cleaning our already thoroughly clean rooms, and in preparing all sorts of nice things for the expected guest. In looking back now upon all these preparations, and remembering why they were so very carefully attended to, I can't help thinking that we were rather of the nature of toadies; but still it happened, and in my character of faithful historian I must tell the truth.

At last the time when the important visitor might be looked for had come, and we were all in a flutter of expectation. My mother had put on her best dress, a steel-grey silk, and a cap trimmed with cherry-coloured ribbons, that was supposed to suit her better than anything else she had. I had yielded to the advice and entreaties of my surroundings, and had dressed myself very carefully in a new suit I had just had made.

We all hovered about near the door, trying to look unconcerned, but failing signally. After a time the sound of approaching wheels told us that the person for whom we were looking was near at hand. Another moment, and the omnibus which plied in the neighbourhood drew up before our garden gate, and a lady, that I rightly supposed was my aunt, alighted.

She was a small, spare woman, with a somewhat severe expression of face, and a sharp, piercing eye, that seemed at once to take stock of everything within a mile of her, and that had the effect of anything in the world rather than that of setting you at your ease. It was with an inward trembling—by no means concealed from one another, if hidden

from her eyes—that we went forward to receive our newly arrived relative; but we managed it pretty well, and before long she was safely installed in the smaller parlour. Then, after the interval of a few moments, my mother suggested that she might like to go to her room and remove her travelling dress, and as she at once took this suggestion, the rest of us were left with a little breathing time.

As far as I was concerned, however, this respite was a very short one. In drawing up a plan of the course of action to be pursued, which had been done in family conclave with the utmost amount of care and deliberation, it had been arranged that, as my aunt might like a private interview with me, I should be, apparently by accident, in the best parlour when she came downstairs again, and that my mother should adroitly withdraw, of course also by accident, and leave us there together.

Accordingly, not long after the two ladies had gone upstairs, I went to the appointed spot, and assumed what seemed to me very much the position of a spider in a web looking for flies. The position was by no means a pleasant one to me, but I consoled myself with the reflection that, on this occasion at least, the fly was by no means an unwary one.

I had not been waiting many minutes before the ladies came down again. I went to the door of the room as gracefully as I could, and my mother upon seeing me remarked, with an air of impromptu that really did her credit:

"Oh, here is Sebastian; will you excuse me for a few moments if I leave you to him?"

My aunt, little suspecting that this was part of a deep-laid plot, bowed with old-fashioned politeness, by no means wanting in stateliness, and surrendered herself to my care.

There was something in the solemnity of the whole proceeding, coupled with the knowledge of what designing humbugs we all were, that made keeping properly grave very difficult to me. But with an effort I managed to repress the smile that tried so hard to rise to my lips, and went forward to take possession of my aunt.

On each side of the fireplace, which was filled at this moment with gaily-coloured paper—for the time of the year was summer—stood an arm-chair, very old fashioned, like the rest of our furniture, with thin, spindley legs, and wide seats covered with chintz. As these were the most dignified-looking objects in the room, I thought the best thing would be to offer one of them to the lady to whom I was doing the honours. Accordingly I led her up to one of them, turned away with the most courtly bow I could manage, and going to the one opposite to her, sat down.

But, oh horror! in the course of the rummage that had taken place in this room to prepare it for the expected guest, the seats of these two

chairs had been taken out, and, little as we suspected it, mismatched. No sooner did my weight come upon it, than the treacherous foundation on which I had hoped securely to repose, gave way, the seat tilted up, and in an instant I found myself sitting through the framework, my knees and my nose almost in contact, and utterly unable to extricate myself.

It had happened so suddenly and unexpectedly that at first I was too much astonished to think of anything but myself; but in an instant I remembered my aunt and looked across at her. My feelings may be imagined when I discovered that she was in exactly the same position as myself, as utterly unable to help herself, and evidently as much astonished as I was. Just as I caught sight of her, however, her self-possession seemed to return, and in angry accents, rendered somewhat uncertain by the inconvenient posture in which she was, she said:

"So, Mr. Sebastian! this is the way in which you treat your relations?"

I have all my life been possessed of a very keen sense of the ludicrous. Whether that possession be an advantage or not I have never quite been able to determine, there is so much to be said on both sides. The position in which we now were, and which indeed was funny enough to have tickled the fancy of the gravest of mankind, amused me so irresistibly that, regardless of the consequences, I burst into a hearty peal of laughter.

Of course the madness of this proceeding became apparent to me at once, and making a desperate effort to check my mirth, and to speak gravely, I began:

"I assure you, Aunt Gregg——"

"There's no good in assuring me anything," interrupted my aunt. "If you were to go on assuring me from now till the last moment of my life, I should not believe you."

"But, my dear aunt——"

"Don't dear aunt me! Do you think I'm not capable of putting two and two together and making four? And when I find you alone in a room, and then find myself in such a position as this, do you suppose that I am going to believe that you didn't do it on purpose?"

Evidently my aunt had no strong perception of what was funny, or she would never have spoken of what had happened in this way. Her gravity tickled me even more than the accident itself, and I had to bite my lip nearly through before I could get out:

"But do try to believe——"

"I shan't try to do anything of the kind! Is your behaviour likely to make me believe in your innocence? If you are sorry for what has happened, why don't you come and help me out, instead of stopping there laughing like an idiot?"

"I really can't move. I would get out if I could," I answered,

struggling faintly. "But I am fixed tight, and can do nothing." And again I was nearly choked by my effort to swallow my laughter.

"Nonsense," Miss Gregg returned in a tone of increased severity. "People of your age are never helpless unless they choose to be so." And thereupon she relapsed into dignified silence, leaving me to feel more ridiculous than I had ever done in my life before.

We were not left many moments in this most unenviable situation before the door of the room opened and my mother came in. With surprise and horror she perceived the plight in which we were placed and running to my aunt, helped her up, apologizing to the worthy lady enough, as it seemed to me, to have excused the most dire injury.

Miss Gregg once more began to express her opinion that I had done it on purpose, when my mother thought it better to join with her and abuse me soundly. My assurances that the misfortune was a pure accident convinced her of my innocence, though they had quite failed to convince my aunt, and she came over to my side at once, and tried with all the eloquence of which she was possessed, to win the irate old lady; but in vain. Miss Gregg was most fully persuaded that I had intentionally offered to her dignity the insult it had recently received and she continued to express her hostile sentiments in the most indignant terms.

We proceeded for some time to talk in the most persuasive and convincing manner at our command, but to no purpose. My aunt would not listen to what we had to say in my defence, and declared persistently and in the most emphatic terms that she would go home at once and never enter our house again. We knew too well what effect such conduct would have upon us, that it would be the end of all our hopes; and we were getting more and more into despair, when suddenly a bright idea came to me. I would go and fetch Claribel. I had the utmost belief in her power of soothing people.

My mother soon understood from the signs I made her what I thought of doing, and as she evidently approved my idea, I left her trying to pacify my aunt and persuade her of my innocence, and started off. It did not take me long to get over the ground between our house and Mr. Myer's, or to explain what had happened to his daughter; and in a very short time Claribel and I returned together.

It turned out just as I had expected. Although my aunt was still very angry, and at first would not even look at the intended mediator, before long she had given in to her pretty, coaxing ways (who indeed could help giving in when Claribel set to work to make them?) and was sitting at the dinner-table in our best parlour on my father's right hand, with my dear girl on the other side of her.

Of course, after this there was no good in pretending to keep up her resentful feelings, and my aunt spent the rest of the day and the succeeding night under our roof as she had originally intended. I did

my very best during that time to cancel, by constant attention, the bad impression that had been made upon her. And I suppose I in great measure succeeded; for as she was going away, and I was standing at the door of the coach in which she was seated, waiting for it to start, she put her hand upon mine, and said:

"I believe that you did not intentionally insult me, after all, Sebastian."

Another moment and the coach had driven off, and I had seen my aunt for the last time.

* * * * * * *

It is now some years since this memorable event happened. I have become a farmer on my own account, and am settled not very far from the place in which Mr. Myer and my father still live. Claribel has changed from a lively girl into a sweet, contented woman, and we are surrounded by numerous rosy-cheeked, healthy-looking children. Not very long after her visit to our house, my aunt died, and left me her heir. The property was enough to enable me to purchase the farm I now possess, and to marry Claribel at once.

We are very happy, and never forget to associate the memory of Miss Gregg with our happiness. But even at this distance of time we can never think without a smile of the accident that so nearly made shipwreck of all our hopes. And of all the stories I tell my children as we sit round the fire of a winter's evening, the one they like best to hear is the history of how I nearly lost my aunt's legacy.

CHECKMATE.

One maiden heard another sighing,
And cried, "Dear Phyllis, what's your grief?"
She answered, "Cupid homeward flying
Shot me, and stole my heart—the thief."

Said merry Joan, "A rogue, I fear me,
Sooner than he should serve me so,
I vow if he dared venture near me
I'd box his ears, and break his bow!"

But when Love found that Joan had chid him,
Casting about what he could do,
In Damon's eyes he went and hid him,
And ambushed there he shot her too.

S. E. G.

THE PRISON HAWK.

The gaol quadrangle is bright with flow'rs,
But the wild hawk mopes in its fragrant bow'rs,
And seems as though counting the weary hours
Of his strange captivity.
Then he away from his rocky dell,
Less sad than the prisoner in his cell,
Shut out from the sun he loves so well,
Shut in with its misery.

Narrow-barred windows look on the square
Too high for view of the myrtles fair
And the richer blossoms gathered there
In merciless mockery
Of the gloom and wretchedness all around,
Of the strong walls with which the space is bound,
Of the clank of hand-cuffs and measured sound
Of the warders passing by.

The hawk's keen eye hates the colours gay,
He pines by night and he pines by day,
He longs for the dear woods far away,
For scent of heather and brake :
But his wings are clipped, and he may not fly
Up toward the open and sunny sky.
Oh, to be free, if even to die !—
Dying for freedom's sake.

The months have passed, his wings have grown,
Forth from the prison the hawk has flown ;
But the outward world is drear and lone !—
Where are the doves to slay ?
Where are the woods, and where is his mate ?
Freedom is sweet, but it comes too late ;
Death for freedom the poor bird's fate ;
He, freedom's hapless prey.

EMMA RHODES.

THE ARGOSY.

JUNE, 1876.

EDINA.

By Mrs. HENRY WOOD, Author of "East Lynne."

CHAPTER XVI.

BROUGHT TO THE SURFACE.

THE Reverend Mr. Backup, in charge just now of the spiritual welfare of Trennach, had read out the banns of marriage on three separate Sundays, between Aaron Pitt, bachelor, and Naomi Perkins, spinster. On the Monday morning following the last announcement, Aaron, who was a young miner, and Naomi, who was nothing at all, and not good for much, either, in the shape of usefulness, presented themselves at the church with their respective friends, for the purpose of being united.

This was the second marriage ceremony that Mr. Backup had had to perform since his sojourn at Trennach. He got through it pretty much as he had the first: namely, with a good deal of inward doubt and hesitation, but successfully as to the result; inasmuch as he was able, at the conclusion, to pronounce them man and wife, without having broken down.

Clerk Trim was present, flourishing in all the importance of his office. Mrs. Trim also. Being on terms of social intimacy with the parties in private life, Mrs. Trim had smartened herself up, and stepped into the church to look on, making one with the rest at the altar rails. After the ceremony, came the business in the vestry. Trim got out the register book, and was opening it to place it before Mr. Backup, when a fresh entry in it caught his eye. The clerk knew every page of the register book as well as he knew his own Sunday shoes: which were made after the fashion of pumps, with big ties of black ribbon in front.

"Mercy upon us!" cried he in his astonishment. "Here's a new marriage wrote down!"

The exclamation caused the party to gather round him. Mr. Backup, remembering the circumstances of the marriage, and that he himself was in the well-preserved secret, turned nervous at once.

"Why it's—it's—it's Mr. Frank Raynor!" went on the clerk, staring at the page, and mastering its revelations but slowly in his consternation. "And Miss—Miss—Well, if ever I was so struck in my life! Did you marry them, sir?" holding out the book to the parson. "Is that your reverence's signature?"

His reverence took the book, muttered something quite foreign to the subject that nobody in the world could hear distinctly, himself included, and proceeded to enter the present marriage. As it was upon the same page, the parties signing it after him had the satisfaction of gratifying their own curiosity; and read, plainly as ink could show it, the names of Francis Raynor and Margaret St. Clare.

Now, had Clerk Trim been haply alone when he made this discovery, he, being a reticent and prudent man, would probably have kept the news to himself. But unfortunately he was not alone. Six or eight people were present, not counting the parson; and, half of them being females, the reader may be left to judge what chance there was of its being kept.

The first to spread it abroad was Mrs. Trim. The wedding company having dispersed—without any invitation to her to accompany them to the house of the bride's mother and partake of the feasting, of which she had cherished some slight hope—Mary Trim betook herself to Float the druggist's. She had no particular work on hand that morning, and thought she could not do better than consecrate it to gossip. Mrs. Float, who was so far an invalid as that she was unable to do much for herself, having been crippled years ago, especially in the hands, by an attack of rheumatic fever, was in her usual chair by the fireside in the small parlour behind the shop, and Blase Pellet was pouring out some hot milk for her. Let the weather be never so warm, Mrs. Float would not go without her bit of fire: and perhaps she needed it. She was a stout, easy woman, who took the best and the worst sides of life with equal calmness; even her husband's attachment to the Golden Shaft. Of Blase Pellet she was very fond: for he was ever ready to render her little services, as he might to a mother. Blase Pellet had his good and his bad qualities—as most people have: it was chiefly upon the subject of Rosaline Bell that he was crazed.

"I'll do that," said Mary Trim, taking the warming-can from him. "You are wanted in the shop, Mr. Pellet. A customer followed me in."

Putting the can within the fender, she gave the cup of milk to Mrs. Float; and at the same time regaled her with an account of the discovery of the entry in the register. Mrs. Float, holding the cup to her mouth with her feeble hands, listened and stared, and for once

felt some surprise; while Blase Pellet behind the left-hand counter, changing one volume for another, caught a word here and there.

"What's that you've been saying about Mr. Raynor?" he demanded, reappearing before Mrs. Trim, after despatching the book-changer. "I don't believe a word of it."

"Then you can disbelieve it," was the tart retort: for Mrs. Trim did not like cold water to be thrown upon her assertions. "Mr. Backup himself married him: there's his reverence's own name writ down to the wedding."

"Married him to Miss St. Clare?"

"To Miss Margaret St. Clare. That's the pretty one. Don't you go disputing a body's word again, Blase Pellet. Fact is fact. Did you suppose they'd write down a lie? They registers 'ud be ticklish things to serve out in that form."

A knocking at the other counter with some copper money, and a calling out of "shop" in fierce and impatient tones, summoned Mr. Blase away again. This time he was wanted to make up a prescription for hair oil: which was composed of various choice ingredients. While he was doing it, his thoughts ran in so deep a groove that he scented it with oil of turpentine instead of bergamotte. And when the purchaser complained, Mr. Blase, after sniffing and looking, and finding out what he had done, being unable to alter it, protested that it was a new scent for the hair just come down from London.

"What a great fool I have been!" ran his reflections. "If it is Miss St. Clare that he has been in love with—and married her, too, in secret—it can't have been Rosaline Bell: and when Rosaline said, poor girl, that there was nothing between them, she must have told the truth. And there I've been and gone and stirred up all this blessed commotion about the old man!—and who is to know whether I shall be able to lay it?"

At any rate, Mr. Blase Pellet tried to "lay" it. He went forth at once, and earnestly assured everybody who would listen to him, that he found he had been mistaken in fancying he had had the dream.

It chanced that on this same Monday morning, Frank Raynor was about to take his departure for London. Whatever disorder it might be that was seizing hold of Dr. Raynor, one thing was certain—that it fluctuated greatly. And though but a few days had elapsed since the return of Edina, he had so visibly improved, both in appearance and in strength, that she thought he was getting well: and Frank felt less scruple in quitting him.

Frank, in his sanguine way, believed he had only to go to London to drop into some good thing; that the one and the other would be, as it were, a simultaneous process. On the spot one can do anything, he observed, when discussing the point with Dr. Raynor. Dr. Raynor

did not oppose his going. Rather the contrary. If Frank went at all, now was the best time: for he knew that this spurt of health in himself, this renewed capability of exertion, would not last. For a time it might; not for ever. During his stay in London, Frank was to look out for, and engage, an assistant for his uncle; a qualified medical man, who might become the partner of Dr Raynor, and might eventually succeed to his practice. In short, just the same kind of thing that Frank was hoping to find for himself with some first-rate medical man in London.

On the previous day, when the congregation was pouring out of church, after Mr Backup's sermon, Frank and Daisy had contrived to exchange a few words, under cover of the crowd around. He told her that he was at length starting for town; and should only come back to claim her. It might be in a week's time—if he were fortunate and found what he wanted at once; or it might be a fortnight. Longer than that it could not be; for his uncle had given that as the extreme limit of his absence. Daisy returned the brief pressure of his hand, which he managed to give unseen, and glanced at him with her bright eyes, that had a whole sea of hope waving in their depths. The world looked very fair to them; and they felt that they had need of patience to endure this enforced separation before they might enter on its enjoyment together.

On that same Sunday, in the evening, Dr. Raynor spoke finally to Frank. They were sitting together, talking of this approaching sojourn in town: and of the great things it was to accomplish.

"Frank," said the Doctor, arousing himself from a reverie, "has it ever occurred to you to think that in carrying out this idea of settling in London, you may be throwing away the substance for the shadow?"

Frank Raynor's gay blue eyes took a wondering expression as they went out to the speaker. He did not catch the drift of the words.

"In what way, Uncle Hugh?"

"It seems to me that the very thing you are about to seek there is lying ready to your hand here."

Frank understood now. "You mean that I should remain with you, Uncle Hugh?"

"Yes. As my partner now, Frank. As my successor hereafter."

Frank Raynor slightly shook his head to imply dissent, but made no other answer.

"I say to you, Frank, what I would say to no one else: that the time before some one must succeed me is growing limited. It may be but a few weeks; it may be a few months: more than twelve months I do not think it can be. If——"

"Oh, Uncle Hugh!"

"Let me finish. I know I have your sympathy, my boy, and your best wishes: but all the sympathy and the good wishes in the world

cannot alter the fiat which I fear has gone forth. Hear me, Frank. This has become a good practice now: it is a thousand pities that you should reject it and let it fall to the lot of a stranger."

"But, if I get a better practice than this in London, Uncle Hugh? I mean, a more lucrative."

"But that is an uncertainty."

"Not much of one," said sanguine Frank.

"At any rate, you will have to pay for it."

"Of course. But I can do that. Uncle Francis is going to make up my legacy to three thousand pounds, you know."

"I know that he says so."

"But—you *can't* doubt his word!" cried Frank, his eyes lifted again in genuine amazement.

"Not his word, Frank: no, nor his intention: both are good and honest as the day's bright. I only doubt his power."

"His power! What, with all that accumulated money just dropped into his hands!"

"But it has not yet dropped into them. It seems that a doubt exists where the money is, or whether there is any to drop."

"Oh, Uncle Hugh, it is sure to be found. I daresay it has already turned up."

"Well, I hope it has, Frank, and that you will reap the benefit you expect. Let it pass so. Still you must spend the money to ensure a practice; and the practice may not turn out to be as lucrative as you shall be led to expect. The practice here is sure; you need not spend your money to secure it; and in a brief space of time, a little sooner or a little later, it will be all in your hands."

"Uncle Hugh, you are very generous, very thoughtful for me; but indeed I could not settle at Trennach. There are reasons——"

Frank pulled himself up hastily. He was going on to say that for certain reasons this one small spot, on all the length and breadth of the world's surface, was barred to him. Rather would he pass his life on some rocky desert unfrequented by man, than within sight and sound of the Bare Plain.

"I do not like Trennach," he went on. "I could not stay here. For the last two or three months," he added in his candour, "I have been as restless as can be, wanting to get away from it."

"You want to be amid a more civilized community than these miners make," said the Doctor good-naturedly.

"Well—yes, Uncle Hugh. I do—when one is setting up for life."

"Then there's no more to be said," concluded Doctor Raynor.

So Frank held to his plan and his journey, and was this morning starting in pursuance of it. Never again, as he hoped, should he be staying at Trennach. Just a few days, as it was arranged, he would remain to introduce the new doctor—who would probably come down

when he did—to people and places; and then he would bid it farewell for ever, carrying Daisy with him.

Taking leave of his uncle and Edina, he set off to walk to the station, his light overcoat thrown back from his shoulders, and greeting everyone he met with a kindly word and a gay smile. The sky overhead was blue, calm, lovely, giving promise that the day would be fair to its end; just as Frank's hopeful heart seemed to give token that his would be a fair life.

"Good morning, Mr. Raynor."

The saluation came from the young parson. He stood leaning on the stile of his back garden, which overlooked the high road. Frank, answering cordially, was intending to pass onwards, but Mr. Backup hastily crossed the stile to speak to him.

"I am off to London," said Frank gaily. "Can I do anything for you?"

"I will not detain you a moment; I want to say just a word," spoke the clergyman, feeling already uncommonly shy and nervous at the thought of what that word was. "Mr. Raynor, I—I—I beg you to believe that I have implicitly kept secret that—that matter which you requested me to keep. But——"

"I know you have," cried Frank, extending his hand to the parson in token of gratitude, "and I thank you heartily. Not a soul knows of it."

"But—I was about to say that I fear it is a secret no longer. Another wedding took place in the church this morning, and the clerk read the entry of yours. Other people read it. They saw it when they signed the book."

The information was just about as complete a damper for Frank Raynor as could well have been administered to him. He stood perfectly still, his lips settling into a grave expression. Not that Frank much cared for the transpiring of the fact in itself: he had thought lately that if it did transpire, it might be a stroke of good luck for him, by giving him Daisy—kept from him in a prison until now. But what struck him was, that if this were true, it would stop his journey to London. Instead of going thither, he must bend his steps to the Mount; for he could not leave Daisy alone to bear the brunt of the discovery

"I knew Aaron Pitt was to be married this morning, but I declare I never gave a thought to the register," spoke he aloud. "They did see it, you say. Did they make any comment?"

"Some comments were made. Clerk Trim was so much surprised that he called out to know whether it was really my signature, and whether I had married you. It crossed my mind to say you did not wish it talked of just at present, and to beg them to keep it secret. But as so many people were there I thought it would be quite useless."

"Quite useless," decided Frank. "Well, this has come upon me unexpectedly, and—and it will change my immediate plans. I must go to the Mount now, instead of to the station."

"I am very sorry," began the clergyman, as nervously as though it were through some fault of his. "There are not two registers, you see, Mr. Raynor, and ——"

"Oh, don't be sorry," interrupted Frank, recovering his spirits and his lightness of tone and heart. "I'm not sure but it may turn out for the best. Upon my return from London, a few days hence, I was going to declare it myself."

They shook hands, and Frank continued his way, striding over the ground at a great rate. Instead of branching off at the turning that led to the railway, he strode straight onwards towards the Mount.

"All for the best," he repeated to himself, referring to his parting words to Mr. Backup. "It may end in my taking Daisy up with me to-day. It shall end so, if my will is worth anything."

Boldly went he to the Mount, knocking and ringing with a free hand. Far from feeling small for having (so to say) run away with the prettiest daughter of the house, for which feat he might expect reproach and obloquy, he seemed to think he had come on some errand that merited reward.

"Can I see Mrs. St. Clare?"

One of the men-servants had flung open the entrance door. He answered immediately.

"Mrs. St. Clare is not at home, sir."

"Indeed!" returned Frank in surprise. For it was not her habit to go out so early.

"My mistress and the young ladies have left home this morning, sir," explained the man. "They are gone for a week, or so."

"Where to?"

"I don't know, sir. It was uncertain. Perhaps as far as Malvern: Miss Lydia likes Malvern: or perhaps only to one of the sea-side places on this coast."

"You cannot tell me where a letter would find Mrs. St. Clare?"

"No, sir. My mistress said that all letters might wait here until she came back."

So there was no help for it: he could not make the communication to Mrs. St. Clare. But in all probability she would hear nothing of the news until her return. Daisy would be sure to write to him, and Edina had been requested to forward his letters to town.

"It must have been rather a sudden thought of Mrs. St. Clare's, this going from home: was it not?"

"Quite so, sir. It was Miss Lydia who started it, while the ladies were sitting in the drawing-room yesterday afternoon. Tabitha never heard a word about packing up, sir, till she was at her tea."

Frank looked at his watch. There might be still time to catch his train yet if he started for the station at the rate of a steam-engine. He set off; and just accomplished it. But that he did so was owing to the fact that the train, as usual, came up considerably behind its time.

It is a great deal easier, in this world, to raise a storm than to allay one: and so Mr. Blase Pellet found to his cost. He had roused the public mind on the subject of the missing miner, Bell; and the public mind refused to come down again.

Day by day, since the discovery in the register, did the astounding news of Frank's private marriage make a deeper impression upon Blase Pellet. He saw things now, looking back, with very different eyes from what he formerly had seen them. He told himself that Rosaline's version of her intimacy with Mr. Raynor—namely, that it was no particular intimacy and had nothing beneath its surface—was the truth. The relief to himself was wonderfully great: all his love for her, that he had been angrily trying to repress, increased tenfold: and he began to see that the love might indeed come to fruition. At least, that if it did not, the fault would have arisen from his own insensate folly. If he could but stop this commotion about Bell, so that the man might lie on where he was, he should make his way with Rosaline. But the public seemed anything but inclined to let it stop: and Blase Pellet gave many a mentally-breathed hard word to the said public. Just at present Trennach appeared to have nothing to do but go about suggesting disagreeable surmises.

One story led to a second; one supposition to another. From the first startling rumour, that Bell might be lying at the bottom of the shaft (as shown to Mr. Pellet in a remarkable dream), Trennach passed on to believe that he was there; and, next, to say that he must be searched for.

In vain Blase Pellet, mortified, agitated, and repentant, sought to prove that Bell was not there; that no foundation could exist for the notion; that he was fully convinced now his dream had not been a dream at all, but a baseless fabric of a fancy. Trennach did not listen to him. Excitement had gone too far for that. It was just possible, of course, that poor Bell might not be in the pit; but they thought he *was;* and, at any rate, they meant to see. As simple-minded, well-meaning Andrew Float expressed it: "Dreams didn't come for nothing." Blase Pellet could have bitten out his false tongue. How easy the future would now have seemed but for this storm! Frank Raynor removed from his path by marriage, his own success with Rosaline could only be a question of time: but if this stir, which he had invoked, could not be stilled, and it went on to any discovery, Rosaline would probably make it an excuse for throwing him off for ever. That it would in any case grieve and anger her frightfully, and

that she would detect the falsity of his "dream," he knew by instinct; and Blase felt tempted to wish he had been born dumb.

When we put ourselves out of the way to delude the world, and do it, moreover, by a lie, the chances are that the step recoils unpleasantly upon ourselves. In some way or another we get repaid in our own coin. It may not be quite immediately; it may not be for years to come; but, rely upon it, it does come home to us sooner or later. We see the blind folly we were guilty of (not to speak of the sin), and we cry out in our flood-tide of repentance, Oh that I had not quitted the straightforward path! As Blase Pellet was crying now.

The owner of the land, one of those mine-owners whose wealth is something fabulous, became interested in the case. He came forward, and gave orders that the deep pit should be examined, to see whether or not the missing man was there. The necessary machinery was soon brought to bear—where wealth commands, difficulties are made easy—and the Bottomless Shaft was searched.

Yes. Josiah Bell was brought up to the surface. His attire was the same that he had worn the day of his disappearance: and there remained no doubt that he had met his death that same night by falling down the pit.

Amid powerful commotion, an inquest was called. Of course the question now was, how had he got down: a question that puzzled his friends and the world. For it was a fact well known that Bell gave way to superstitious fancies, and would not be likely to go near the shaft alone at night.

But no evidence came forward that could throw light on the mystery. Those who had seen him last in life—the pitmen with whom he had been drinking at the Golden Shaft, and his wife at home, who had been the last, so far as was known, to exchange speech with him—told what they had to tell. Their testimony amounted to nothing. Neither, for the matter of that, did Mr. Blase Pellet's. Very much to his inward dismay, Mr. Pellet was summoned as a witness, and was sharply questioned about his dream by the coroner.

And Blase, in sheer helplessness and some terror, took up the dream again; the dream which he had been lately seeking to repudiate, so far as might be. He saw no other course, now that matters had come to this pass, and Bell had been actually found. If he disowned the dream, the next inquiry would be, How then did you come to know anything of the matter: what told you that the man was lying there? So, with a clouded face, and voice uneasy, Mr. Blase gave the history of his dream: and when asked by a juryman why he had gone about lately protesting that he was sure he had not had any dream, he replied that, seeing the public were growing so excited, he had deemed it better to disavow it, thinking it might calm them. The coroner, who seemed to be unfortunately sceptical as to dreams in general, eyed the

witness keenly, and made him repeat the dream—at least what he remembered of it—three times over. Blase declared he had never been able to recollect much of it, except the fact that he had seen Bell lying at the foot of the pit, dead. And then he had awakened in a state of inconceivable fright.

"Had you any animosity against the deceased during his life?" questioned the coroner, still regarding the witness intently.

"Oh dear no, sir," returned Blase. "We never had a mis-word in our lives, but were always the best of friends. He was a kind of relation of mine. At least, his wife is."

That no animosity had existed between them could be testified to by the community in general, as the coroner found. He was looking at Blase still.

"And you positively state, young man, that you had no grounds whatever, except this dream, for suspecting or knowing that the deceased was down the shaft?"

Blase coughed. "No."

"You do not know how he got down?"

"Good gracious! Me know! Not I, sir."

Blase had answered readily, save for the short cough, and with much appearance of earnestness. The coroner might be conscious of some dim doubts that were floating in his own mind, arising chiefly from his incredulity as to dreams; but the doubts were not sufficient to act upon, neither did he perceive that they could be in any way supported. So he released the witness. And the inquest came to an end, the jury returning an open verdict.

That Josiah Bell met his death through falling down the pit; but that what caused his fall, there was no evidence to show.

CHAPTER XVII.

A DANGEROUS ENEMY.

"He never went near that pit of his own free will! He was lured to its edge and flung down it: or he was killed outright, and put down there afterwards out of the way."

The speaker was Mrs. Bell: who had at last assumed the widow's dress and cap. Her audience consisted of her daughter Rosaline, the Aunt Pellet from Falmouth, Blase Pellet, and two or three of the neighbours. The aunt and Rosaline had arrived from Falmouth to attend the funeral. Rosaline, at first, had absolutely refused to come; she was afraid, she said, with much trembling and many bitter tears, she did not like to look upon the dead, even though it was her poor

father: and she was too ill besides. But John Pellet and his wife over-ruled this: they told her it was an "unnatural state of feeling," and the aunt, who was coming to Trennach herself, brought Rosaline with her, partly by over-persuasion, partly by force.

Her plea of illness might indeed have been allowed. Thin, white, worn, with a shrinking manner that seemed to be always starting at shadows, Rosaline looked little like the gay and blooming girl once known to Trennach. Trennach gazed at her with amazed eyes, wondering what Falmouth could have done to her in that short period, or whether the Seven Whistlers, which had so startled her at home, could have followed her to that populous town. Sitting here in her mother's kitchen, her back to the light, her cheek resting on her hand, Rosaline listened in silence to the conversation, two people amid the company especially regarding her: Blase Pellet and Nancy Tomson. Nancy openly avowed that she had never seen any young woman so changed in all her life; while Blase Pellet, though mentally acknowledging the change, was drinking in her wondrous beauty.

"No men living have, as a body, queerer fancies than miners, especially these Cornish miners: and poor Josiah, though he was not Cornish by birth, as we all know, had his," pursued Dame Bell, chiefly addressing her sister: a tall, thin woman, who had arrived fashionably attired in crape and bombazine, with a veil to her bonnet. Not that she had her bonnet on now, for this was the morning afterwards, and the day of the funeral.

"There's hardly a man about here that would venture close up alone to that shaft at night: and if you go out and ask 'em one by one, Sarah, you'll find I am telling you nothing but the truth," continued the widow, pursuing her argument. "Since Dan Sandon threw himself headlong in, and was killed, the men won't go near it for fear of seeing him. Neither would Bell. And he'd no more go up to that pit's mouth by himself at night, I say, than he'd——"

"Perhaps he fell down it accidentally, Ann?" interrupted Mrs. Pellet.

"I don't say but what he might. If he was on its brink, looking down, or anything of that, he might have overbalanced himself. But I do say that he was not there alone. I ask what took him to it at all: and I ask who was with him?"

Pertinent questions, both. Rosaline, chancing to look up, met the eyes of Blase Pellet. Each started slightly, as though to look at one another were a crime.

"Let us put it down as being an accident, for argument's sake," urged the widow. "Why didn't the other man (or men) give an alarm? Why didn't he (or they) come running away from the pit and say, poor Bell has fallen down that shaft, and what's to be done? Come: can any of you answer me that?"

"Well, it stands to reason that that's what anybody would do," observed Mrs. Pellet. "But who was it that was with him?"

"There ain't one o' the men owns to it," put in Nancy Tomson. "What should have took 'em up to that there ghastly shaft at night, they ask, or Bell either?"

"No, not one owns to it: and, as far as I can see, there was nothing to take 'em," assented Mrs. Bell. "Therefore I say it was no accident. Bell was just carried there, dead or alive, as might be, and put away out o' sight."

"What shall you do about it?" asked Mrs. Pellet, in a scared tone.

"What can I do, but wait? Wait till something turns up."

"If it never does turn up?"

"But it will," confidently asserted Dame Bell.

"So say I," spoke Nancy Tomson. "When once a thing o' this kind is led up to by dreams, it won't stop at the beginning. They dreams is strange indexes sometimes, and Mr. Blase Pellet there didn't have his for nothing. Without that dream, the poor man might just ha' laid where he was, unsuspected, for ever."

Mr. Blase Pellet, listening to this, shot a glance of intense aggravation at the speaker. Rosaline looked up at him. It was a steady gaze this time: and one that betrayed unqualified contempt.

"Was it a very bad dream?" asked his relative from Falmouth: this being the first opportunity she had had to question Blase upon the subject.

"Bad enough," shortly replied Pellet. And, with the words, he made a sudden detour to the front door, and took up his standing outside in the sunshine.

The movement led to a general dispersion. Nancy Tomson and the other neighbours departed; Mrs. Pellet went upstairs; Dame Bell passed into the back kitchen to see about their own and her lodgers' dinner; for the ordinary day's work must go on even at funeral times; and Rosaline stayed in the room alone.

"I am very sorry I had that dream."

Lifting her eyes, which had been buried in her hand, Rosaline saw the speaker beside her—Blase Pellet.

"So am I," she shortly answered in a significant tone, that certainly gave him no encouragement to proceed.

"And still more sorry that I spoke of it abroad, Rosaline. For I see that it is giving you pain."

"Pain!" she ejaculated, a whole world of anguish in her tone. Ay, and of resentment also.

"But it shall be the chief endeavour of my life to atone to you for it, Rosaline. My best care, my truest love, shall be devoted to you. Daily and hourly——"

"Be quiet, Blase," she interrupted, the spirit in her eye, the hot

flush upon her cheek rendering her for the moment almost more than beautiful. "We will understand one another at once, and finally. To talk of such a thing as 'love,' or 'care,' to me is worse than useless. My path lies one way, yours lies another: it will not be my fault if they ever cross each other again."

"You do not mean this?" he said, after a pause.

"I do mean it. I used to mean it: as you know. I shall mean it always."

With a quick movement, she evaded his outstretched hand, that would have sought to detain her, and ran up the stairs. Leaving Mr. Blase Pellet uncommonly discomfited: but not as much so as a less hopeful swain would have been.

"It was a little too soon to speak," reasoned he with himself. "I must wait a while."

Of all the scenes connected with Bell's disappearance and his recovery, none caused more excitement than that of the funeral. It was fixed for a late hour—six o'clock in the afternoon. This was to enable the pitmen to be present. The Reverend Mr. Backup made no sort of objection. Had they fixed it for midnight, he had been equally agreeable. The hour for the interment came, and people flocked to it from far and wide. Not only did the local miners attend, but also the gangs of men from other mines far distant. Mr. Backup had never seen such a crowd in his life. Just around the grave a small space was left for Mrs. Bell and the other mourners; but in the churchyard and the parts adjacent, including a portion of the Bare Plain, the spectators thronged.

Rosaline was not there. Blase was. In right of his relationship to the Pellets of Falmouth, Blase had been invited to attend; and made one of the mourners, with a flow of crape hanging to his hat. Whether Rosaline had meant to make one also did not clearly appear, though nobody thought to doubt it; but just before the time of starting, she was seized with a kind of fainting fit. Not quite losing her consciousness, but lying back powerless in her chair, and looking white as death. Nancy Tomson, who was to be of the procession, was the first to recognize the dilemma the seizure placed them in.

"What is to be done?" she cried. "It'll never do to keep *him*, and the parson, and they folks waiting; but she can't walk like this!"

The "him" applied to poor Bell. At least, to what was left of him. For the convenience of the inquest and other matters, he had been placed in a shelter bordering on the Bare Plain, partly room, partly shed, when first brought up from the pit, and had not been removed. It was there that the mourners would meet the coffin and attend it to the church.

"True," put in Mrs. Trim; who had deemed it but neighbourly to

look in upon the Widow Bell at this sorrowful hour and see what was to be seen. "They funerals don't wait for nobody: specially when they be put off to a'most sunset."

"No, it will not do to keep it waiting," breathed Rosaline from her weak and trembling lips. "Do you go on; all. I will follow if I am able, and catch you up."

Nancy Tomson feebly offered to stay with her, seeing that good feeling demanded as much, but she did not at all mean the offer to be accepted, for she would not miss the ceremony for the world: it was not every day she had the chance of fulfilling a post of importance at a funeral; and such a funeral as this. Rosaline promptly declined her company, saying she felt much better now and preferred to come after them alone.

So the mourners departed, followed at a respectful distance by many neighbours, and others, who had collected to watch and wait for their exit. The chief crowd had gathered about that other building, for which these were now making their way. Men, women, and children went tramping off towards it across the Plain; and in a few minutes Bleak Row was as absolutely deserted as though it were a city of the dead.

Rosaline slowly rose from her seat, dragged the chair outside, and sat down in the evening sunshine. Thankful was she to be alone. No eye was on her. The houses were empty; the Bare Plain, stretching out around and beyond, lay silent and still, save for that moving mass of human beings, pressing farther and farther away into the distance. The open air seemed necessary to her if she would continue to draw breath. When somewhat more composed, she put up her two hands in the attitude of prayer, bent forward till her forehead touched them, and sat with her eyes closed.

A prayer-book lay on her knee. She had brought it forth, intending to follow the service, soon about to begin. But she could not. There she sat, never once moving her attitude, some scattered passages of the service recurring now and again to her memory, and ascending to heaven from the depths of her anguished heart. Poor Rosaline Bell! There were some moist eyes and wrung feelings amid those mourners standing round the grave, but none of them could know aught of the desperate distress that was *her* portion. None, none.

But now, it was perhaps a somewhat singular coincidence that just as Frank Raynor should have come unexpectedly upon that excited throng, collected round the Bottomless Shaft on the Bare Plain, a few nights before his departure for London, so he should now in like manner come quite as unexpectedly upon this throng, gathered at Bell's funeral. The one had not surprised him more than the other did. He had been just a fortnight absent in London; this was the day of his return, and he was now walking home from the station. All the

excitement, consequent upon the finding of Bell, had taken place during these two weeks of Frank's absence. There had been commotion (the result of Blase Pellet's "dream") before his departure, with much talking and surmising; but all action had taken place since.

In a letter written to him by Edina, Frank had learnt that Bell was found. But he learnt nothing more. And he certainly had not thought of coming into the midst of the funeral, and of this large mass of people collected at it, as he passed the churchyard on his way from the station to his uncle's, on this, the evening of his return.

Before he knew what it all meant, or could quite make out whether his eyes were not playing him false, he found himself accosted by the clerk's wife, Mary Trim. Mrs. Trim told all she knew, intensely gratified at the opportunity of doing it, and a good deal that she did not know. Frank listened in silence.

"Yes, sir, he was found there, down deep in the pit shaft, and they jurymen never brought it in one way nor t'other, whether he was throwed down wilful, or fell in accidental, but just left folks to fight out the question for their own selves. It were a dreadful thing for him any way, poor man: to ha' been lying there all this while."

"I never saw so many people at a funeral in my life," observed Frank, making no direct comment on her words.

He mechanically moved onwards a step, and looked over the hedge that skirted the graveyard. Mary Trim continued her information and remarks: detailing the mourners by name, and stating that Rosaline was seized with a kind of faint when they were starting, and so remained at home alone.

"Alone!" cried Frank.

"All alone entirely," repeated Mary Trim. "Every soul from all parts is here, Mr. Frank; as you may see. She said perhaps she'd follow if she felt equal to't; but she's not come. She and her aunt talks o' going back to Falmouth to-morrow; but the widow, poor thing, is against it. That's the aunt, sir: that tall, thin woman."

Rapidly Frank Raynor debated a question with himself. He much wished to say a few words to Rosaline in private: what if he seized upon this occasion for it? If she were indeed going away again on the morrow, he might find no other opportunity. Yes: at any rate he would try.

Turning somewhat abruptly from the clerk's wife, leaving her in the middle of a sentence, Frank made a detour round the churchyard on the outskirts of the crowd, and strode very rapidly away over the Bare Plain. Rosaline was sitting just in the same position, her head bowed, her hands raised. His footsteps aroused her.

Respecting her grief as he had never respected any grief yet, feeling for her (and for many other things connected with the trouble) from the bottom of his heart, uncertain and fearful of what the ultimate end

would be, Frank took her hand in silence. She gazed up at him yearningly, almost as though she did not at once recognize him, a pitiful expression on her face. For a short while he did not speak a word. But, what he had come to say, must be said, and without delay: for already the ceremony had terminated, and the procession of mourners, with the attendant crowd, might be seen advancing across the Bare Plain.

"It has nearly killed me," moaned Rosaline. "I should be thankful that he is found, but for the fear: thankful that he has had Christian burial. But there can be no more security now. There was not much before."

"Nay," spoke Frank, "I think it is just the contrary. While the affair lay in uncertainty, it was liable to be stirred up at any moment: now it will lie at rest."

"Never," she answered. "Never so long as Blase Pellet lives. He has brought this much about; and he may bring more. Oh, if we could but be hidden from him!"

Frank, holding her hand still, in his deep compassion, spoke to her quietly and kindly for a few moments. She seemed to listen as one who hears not, as one whom words cannot reach or soothe; her eyes were fixed on the ground, her other hand hung listless. But now the first faint hum of the mass of people, approaching nearer and nearer, struck upon her half-dulled ear; she raised her eyes and saw what caused it. First in the line walked her mother and aunt, their black robes and the black hoods on their heads lighted up by the setting sun. And as if the sight of those mourning garments put the finishing touch to her already distracted mind and conveyed some sudden terror into it, Rosaline gave a shrill scream and fell into a fit of hysterics, almost of convulsions. Frank could not quit her, even to dash indoors for water. He put his arm round her to hold her still.

"What on earth is it, sir?" demanded Nancy Tomson, who was the first to speak, when the group of hooded women came up.

"It is only an attack of hysterics," said Frank. "She fell into it but now: I think with the sight of your approach. It is a sad day for her, you know; and she does not seem very strong. Let somebody get some water."

"I thought it must be your ghost, Mr. Frank," spoke poor Mrs. Bell, in a subdued tone, as she put back the hood. "Believing you were in London——"

"I am back again," he shortly interrupted. "Seeing your daughter sitting here, I turned aside to speak a word of sympathy."

The sobbing hysterics subsided as quickly as they came on; and Rosaline, putting aside the water untasted, rose of her own accord and passed into the house. The women pressed in after her, leaving Blase Pellet outside. As to the mass of voluntary attendants, they

had slackened steps beforehand some distance off, and seemed to be uncertain what next to do: whether to disperse on their various roads, or to remain talking with one another.

This virtually left Frank and Blase Pellet alone. Blase took off his tall Sunday hat, and rubbed his brow with his white handkerchief, as though the heavy hat and the burning sun had left an unpleasant sensation of heat there. It was, however, neither the hat nor the sun that had put him into that access of warmth; it was the sight of Frank Raynor. Of Frank Raynor holding Rosaline's hand in his, holding *her*, in fact, and bending over her with what looked very like an outburst of affection.

A most disagreeable idea had flashed into Mr. Pellet's head. A dim, indistinct idea, it is true, but none the less caught at. Married man though Frank Raynor was, as the world of Trennach knew, he might not have given up his love of Rosaline! He might be intending to keep that sentiment on; keep her to himself, in short, to laugh and chatter with whenever they should meet, to the present destruction of the hopes of everybody else, including Blase Pellet. And Blase, in the plentitude of his wrath, could have struck him to the earth as he stood.

How mistaken people can be! How wildly absurd jealousy makes them! Nothing could be further from the thoughts of Frank Raynor than any such meaning: he was at honest peace with all the world, most certainly intending no harm to Rosaline, or to anyone else. At peace even with that one unit in it, Blase Pellet: and in the plenitude of his good-nature he addressed him cordially.

"You have been one of the followers of poor Bell, I see. The affair is altogether a sad one."

"Yes, it is," replied Blase Pellet. "We have been putting him into his grave; and matters, so far, are hushed up. But I don't say that they are hushed for good. I could hang some people to-morrow."

The intense acrimony of his tone, the steady gaze of his meaning eyes, proved that this man might yet become a dangerous enemy. Frank's courage fell.

"What do you mean?" he asked. But for the very life of him he could not coax his voice to be quite so free and independent as usual.

"It does not matter saying now what I mean, Mr. Raynor. Perhaps I never shall say it. I'd rather not: and it won't be my fault if I do. *You keep out of my way* and out of somebody else's way, and I daresay I shall be still, and forget it. Out of sight, out of mind, you know, sir."

Frank, deigning no reply, turned into the house to see if there was anything he could do for Rosaline. And then he walked away rapidly towards Trennach.

Mrs. St. Clare had not yet returned to the Mount, but she was

expected daily. Frank had received three or four letters from Daisy, re-posted to him to London by Edina, but not one letter had he been able to write in return. They were going about from place to place in obedience to Lydia's whims, Daisy said, and it was simply impossible to give any certain address where a letter might find her. Every day for a week past had her mother announced her intention of turning her steps homeward on the morrow: and every morrow, as it dawned, had her steps been turned to some fresh place instead.

But Frank was in a fever of impatience for their return now. The five hundred pounds legacy was ready to be paid him, and he meant to take Daisy away on the strength of it. He had no fixed plans as yet: they had been delayed by the uncertainty attending the larger sum promised him; the three thousand pounds. Strictly speaking, it was two thousand five hundred; for this first sum of five hundred was to form a portion of it. It is true that Frank had made inquiries in London; had seen two old-established medical men who were thinking of taking a partner. But each of them wanted a good sum paid down as equivalent; and neither of them seemed to be so sanguine on the score of Frank's coming into the three thousand pounds as he himself was. With his usual straightforward candour, he disclosed the full particulars of the doubts, as well as of the expectations. So, with the future still undecided, here he was, back at Trennach: but only back to make preparations to finally leave it.

With regard to the assistant for Dr. Raynor, he had been more fortunate; and had secured the services of one whom he judged to be in every way suitable. It was a Mr. Hatman. This gentleman was coming down on the morrow. He and Frank were to have travelled together, but Mr. Hatman could not get his arrangements completed quite so soon as he had thought; and Frank dared not delay even another day, lest Mrs. St. Clare should return. He could not leave Daisy to bear alone the brunt of the discovery of their marriage. Mr. Hatman was to have a three months' trial. At the end of that period, if it were found that he suited the Doctor, and the Doctor and the place suited him, he would remain.

It was not often that Dr. Raynor found fault or gave blame. But on this night, after Frank's return, when they were shut up together alone, he took Frank severely to task. Common report had carried the news of the marriage to him; and he expressed his opinion of it very freely.

"It was perhaps a hasty thing to do, sir, and was entered upon without much thought," admitted Frank, after he had listened. "But we did not care to lose one another."

"Well, I will say no more," returned Dr. Raynor. "The thing cannot be undone now. There's an old saying, Frank, that is perhaps more often exemplified than people think: 'Marry in haste and repent

at leisure.' I wish this case of yours may prove an exception, but I can scarcely hope that it will."

"We shall get along all right, Uncle Hugh."

"I trust you will."

"I told Hatman about it—he is a very nice fellow, and you will be sure to like him, uncle—and he wished me and Daisy jolly good luck. He says his mother's was a runaway match, and it turned out famously."

On the day but one following; that is, the day after Mr. Hatman arrived at Trennach; Mrs. St. Clare and her daughters returned to the Mount: not reaching it, however, until late at night, for they had missed the earlier train they had meant to travel by.

Frank went up betimes the next morning. His interview with Mrs. St. Clare took place alone. She was surprised and indignant at what he had to disclose—namely, that the marriage ceremony had passed between him and her daughter Margaret. But, on the whole, she was more reasonable than might have been expected.

"I wash my hands of it altogether, Mr. Frank Raynor, of her and of you, as I said I would—though you may be sure that when I spoke I never contemplated so extreme a step as this that she has taken. But that I cannot disbelieve what, as you say, is so easy of proof, I should have thought it impossible to be true. Daisy has always been so docile and dutiful."

"I will make her the best of husbands; she shall never know an hour's care with me," spoke Frank earnestly, his truthful blue eyes and the sincerity on his beaming face expressing more than words could do.

"But what of your means of keeping her?" asked Mrs. St. Clare coldly.

"By the aid of the three thousand pounds I have mentioned to you, I shall get into a first-class practice in London," returned he in his most sanguine manner. "I trust you will not despise that position for her. Our first practitioners take a high standing, Mrs. St. Clare. Some of them are baronets, you know—if you care about a title. I should like to see Daisy Lady Raynor."

"So should I!" returned Mrs. St. Clare in a tone that rather took Frank and his earnestness aback, for it displayed too much mocking disbelief in the prospect. "Well, I wash my hands of you both, Mr. Francis Raynor. I wash my hands of *her*. As she has made her bed so she must lie on it."

Daisy was summoned to the conference. She came in with timid steps; and stood, tearful and trembling, in her pretty morning dress of coloured muslin. It chanced to be the one she was married in. Frank Raynor drew her arm within his, and stood with her.

"You may well shrink from me, unhappy girl!" cried Mrs. St. Clare. "Where is your wedding-ring?"

With shaking hands, Daisy produced it, attached to its piece of blue

ribbon. Frank took it from her, broke the ribbon, and placed the ring on its proper finger.

"Never again to be taken off, my dear," he said. "Our troubles are over."

She was to be allowed to remain at the Mount until the afternoon—which Mrs. St. Clare called a great concession—and then she and Frank would start on the first stage of their journey. Daisy might take a box of apparel with her; the rest should be forwarded to any address she might choose to give.

Back went Frank again to Dr. Raynor's to prepare for the departure on his own score. Very busy was he that day. Now talking with his uncle, now with Edina, now with Mr. Hatman; and now running about Trennach to shake hands with all the world in his sunny-natured way. A hundred good wishes were breathed by him; a hundred little children made happy by sweetmeats. Even to Blase Pellet—even to him—Frank gave a kindly word and nod at parting.

It was late in the afternoon when he, in a close carriage provided for the occasion, went up to the Mount for Daisy. She was ready, and came out, attended to the door by only Tabitha: Mrs. St. Clare and Lydia did not appear. Thence she and Frank drove to the station: and found they had five minutes to spare.

Frank had been seeing to the luggage, when Daisy came out of the waiting-room to meet him. It was one of those small stations that contain but one waiting-room for all classes.

"The most beautiful girl is sitting inside, Frank," she said in an undertone. "I could not keep my gaze from her. But she looks very ill."

"Is there?" he carelessly remarked, as they both went in together.

But, to Daisy's extreme surprise, she, the next moment, saw Frank go up and speak to this girl; who was sitting with an elderly companion, both of them in deep mourning. Daisy, her eyes fixed on the beautiful face, wondered who they could be: wondered whether they were ladies, or whether they were not.

But there was no further time. The train came puffing in, and all was bustle. Daisy saw Frank again shake hands cordially with this delicate-looking girl, and whisper a few farewell words to her. She was evidently not departing by this train: probably by one going in the opposite direction.

"Who was it, Frank?" questioned Daisy, when they were at length seated in the carriage.

"It is Rosaline Bell. She and her aunt are going back to Falmouth."

"*That* Rosaline Bell!" exclaimed Daisy, her face flushing scarlet. "I—I—did not know she was so very beautiful."

CHAPTER XVIII.

AT EAGLES' NEST.

In a luxurious chamber at Eagles' Nest, where the carpet was soft as moss to the tread, and the hangings were of silk, and the toilette ornaments were rich and fragile, sat Edina Raynor. Her elbow rested on the arm of the chair, her thoughtful face was bent on her hand, her eyes were taking in the general aspect of the room and its costly appurtenances.

It was autumn weather now, and Edina had come on a short visit to Eagles' Nest. She had wished to put the visit off until the following spring, but had yielded to pressing. One or other of them at Eagles' Nest was perpetually writing to urge her; and at last Dr. Raynor added his word to theirs. "There is no reason why you should not go, Edina," he said. "Hatman and I get on famously well together, you know; and I am better than I was." And so Edina had made the long journey; and—here she was.

Not yet had she been two days at Eagles' Nest; but in that short time she had found much to grieve her. Grieved she was, and full of anxiety. Every one of the family, from her Uncle Francis and Mrs. Raynor downwards, had greatly changed. From the simple, unaffected people they had once been, they had transformed themselves into grand personages with assumption and airs. That was not the worst. That might have been left to find its own level: in time they would no doubt have come back to common sense. What pained Edina was the rate at which they lived. Cost here, expense there, show everywhere. Carriages, horses, servants; dinners, dressing, gaiety. Where could it all end? Had the revenues of Eagles' Nest been what they were twice told, the Major would still have been spending more than his income. This it was that troubled Edina.

And something else troubled her. The *tone* of their mind seemed to be changing: not so much that of Major and Mrs. Raynor, but of the children. Speaking, of course, chiefly of the elder ones. Formerly they were warm-hearted, unassuming, considerate, full of sympathy for the woes of others. Now all thought seemed to be swallowed up in self: those who wanted help, whether in word or kind, might go where they would for it; selfishness reigned supreme. An underlying dread was making itself heard in Edina's heart, that they were being spoiled by sudden prosperity. As many others have been.

The first day she arrived, the dinner was served at seven o'clock; a very elaborate one. Soup, fish, entrées, meats, sweets: all quite à la mode. Edina was vexed: she thought this had been done for her: but she was much more vexed when she found it was their daily style

of living. To her, with the never-to-be-effaced frugal notions implanted in her mind by her father's early straits, with her naturally simple tastes, and her conscientious judgment of what was right and wrong, this luxurious profusion seemed sinful waste. And—they were all dressed so much! The faded cottons, the washed-out muslins, had given place to costly gossamer fabrics and silks that rustled in their richness. Alice had already put off black for her Aunt Atkinson and was now in very slight mourning indeed: shining lilac or white hues, with black or grey ribbons. And, with it all, they were acquiring a hard, indifferent tone, as though the world's changes and sorrows could not again concern them.

"All this looks new," mused Edina, referring to the appurtenances of the room. "I don't fancy my Aunt Ann had anything so modern: she favoured old-fashioned furniture. With these expenses going on, Uncle Francis will soon be in greater embarrassment than he ever was in at Spring Lawn. And it is bad for Charley. Very bad. It will foster in him all kinds of extravagant ideas and habits."

As if to escape her thoughts, she rose and stood at the window, looking forth on the pleasant landscape. It was very beautiful. There were hills in the distance and hills near, a large extent of wood and gleaming snatches of water, green meadows, and a field or two of yellow corn that had ripened late. The leaves on the trees were already beginning to change; to put on their lovely autumn tints. On the lawn were beds of bright flowers. Under a tree sat the Major, sipping a champagne-cup, of which he was fond. Beyond, were three young people playing at croquet: Charles, Alice, and William Stane; the latter a son of Sir Philip Stane, who lived near. Down the path of one of the bare cornfields, whose corn was already reaped and gathered, walked Mademoiselle Delrue, the French governess, and little Kate. Alfred was at school. Robert was mostly with his nurse. Mademoiselle, a finished pianist, superintended Alice's music and read French with her; also took Robert for French: otherwise her duties all lay with Kate. It was, of course, well to have a resident French governess and to pay her sixty guineas a year if they could afford it: but, altogether, one might have supposed Major Raynor had dropped into an income of five or six thousand a year, instead of only two thousand.

A shout and a laugh from the croquet lawn caused Edina to look towards the players. The game was at an end. At the same moment Alice saw Edina. She threw down her mallet, and ran upstairs.

"Why don't you come out, Edina? It is a lovely afternoon."

"I came up for my work, dear, and stayed thinking," replied Edina, drawing Alice to her side, and keeping her arm round her.

"What about?"

"Of many things. Chiefly about you and Charley. You both seem so changed."

"Do we?"

"And not for the better."

Alice laughed. She was nearly eighteen now, and very pretty. Her head was lifted with a conscious air: she played with one of the lilac bows on her white dress.

"I know what you mean, Edina: you heard mamma tell me this morning that I was growing vain."

"No, I did not hear her." But Edina said no more just then.

"Is Mr. Stane often here?" she asked.

"Oh—yes—pretty well," replied Alice with a vivid blush. "He and Charley are good friends. And—and he lives near, you know."

The blush and the hesitation seemed to hint at a story Edina had not yet glanced at. She had but been wondering whether this young Stane was a desirable companion for Charles: one likely to encourage him in his idleness and his extravagance, or to turn his ideas towards better things.

"Mr. Stane is older than Charley, Alice."

"By several years. He is a barrister, and lives at his chambers in the Temple. Just now he is down here a great deal on account of his father's illness."

"Are they rich people?"

"No, I think not. Not very rich. Of course Sir Philip has plenty of money, and he has retired from practice. He used to be a lawyer in the City of London, and was knighted for something or other."

"Is William Stane the only son?"

"He is the second son. The eldest has the law business in the City; and there are two others. One is in the army."

"I like his look," mused Edina, gazing down at the young man; who was now talking with Major Raynor. "And—I rather like his manners. His countenance has pride in it, though."

Pride it certainly had: but it was a pleasant countenance, for all that. William Stane was about the middle height, with a rather rugged, honest, intelligent face, and an earnest manner. His eyes and hair were dark.

"*Won't* you come down, Edina?"

Edina turned at the appeal, and took up some work that lay ready on the table. "I was getting short of pocket handkerchiefs," she said, in reference to it, "so I bought half a dozen new ones before I left home, and am now hemming them."

Alice shrugged her pretty shoulders. "Let one of the maids hem them for you, Edina. The idea of your troubling yourself with plain work!"

"The idea of my *not* troubling myself!—of my giving them to your maids to do!" returned Edina. "Was life made all for play, child, think you? At Spring Lawn the hemming of handkerchiefs was regarded as pastime, amid the heavier work there was to do."

"Oh, but those days have all changed," said Alice resentfully, not at all pleased at their being recalled.

"Yes; and you have all changed with them.—By the way, Alice, I was thinking what a beautiful room this is. Is not the furniture new?"

"All of it," replied Alice. "It was quite dingy when we came to it; and papa and mamma thought that, as it was to be the state room for visitors, they would have it done up properly."

Edina sighed. "It is very nice, very; too good for me. I am not used to such a one."

She sat down by the side of Major Raynor under the weeping elm-tree, and went on with her work. Charles, Alice, and young Stane began another game of the everlasting croquet. The Major looked on and sipped his champagne-cup, the very image of intense satisfaction. Though he must have known that he was living at a most unjustifiable rate and that it must bring upon him the old enemy, debt, he looked as free from thought and care as anyone can look in this world. Ay, and felt so, too. Not long yet had he been at this delightful place, Eagles' Nest; the time might be counted by weeks; but he had already grown fat upon it. He was stout enough before, rather too much so, but he was stouter now. The lost bonds, or vouchers, for the (supposed) accumulated money left by Mrs. Atkinson, were depended upon by the Major as a certain resource for any little extra expenses not justified by his present means. The bonds had not turned up yet, but he never doubted they would come to light some fine day. Hope, that most precious of our gifts, deceitful though it does sometimes prove, was always buoyantly rife in Major Raynor.

It was on this very subject, the lost bonds, that Edina began to speak. The conversation was led up to. She had scarcely sat down when a servant came out of the house and approached his master, saying that "Tubbs" had come again and particularly wished to have his little account settled, if quite convenient to the Major, as he had a payment to make up.

"But it's not convenient," was the Major's reply. "Tell Tubbs to come again next week."

"Is it any matter of a few shillings, or so?" asked Edina, looking up, really thinking it might be, and that the Major did not care to trouble himself to go indoors for the money. "Because I have my purse in my pocket, Uncle Francis, and ——"

"Bless you, my dear, it's a matter of fifteen or twenty pounds," interrupted the Major, complacently watching his servant, who was carrying the message indoors. "For new harness and saddles, and things. Tubbs is a saddler in the village, and we thought we would give him a turn. Your Aunt Ann employed the tradespeople of the locality, and we think it right to do the same."

"Perhaps he wants his money, Uncle Francis?"

"No doubt of it, my dear. I'll pay him when I can. But as to ready money, I seem to be more short of it than ever. All the spare cash that came to me at your Aunt Ann's death has run away in a wonderful manner. Sometimes I set myself to consider what it can have gone in; but I might as well try to count the leaves on that walnut-tree."

"I am very sorry," said Edina. "And you are living at so much cost."

"Oh, it will all be right when the bonds turn up," cried the Major cheerfully. "Street says, you know, that there must be fifteen or twenty thousand pounds somewhere."

"But he is not sure that there are any bonds to turn up, Uncle Francis. He does not *know* that the money exists still. Aunt Ann may have speculated, and lost it."

"Now, my dear, is that likely?" cried the Major. "Ann was never a speculating woman. And, if she had lost the money in any way, she would have been sure to say so. Street tells me she gave him all kinds of injunctions during the last year for the proper keeping-up of this estate, involving no end of cost: she'd not have done that had there been no accumulated money to fly to."

"And do you keep it up well, uncle?"

"Why, how can I, Edina? I've no means to do it with."

"But are not the revenues of the estate sufficient to keep it up?"

"Well, they would be; but then you see I have so many expenses."

Edina did quite two inches of her hemming before speaking again. The course they had embarked upon at Eagles' Nest seemed to be a wrong one altogether: but she felt that it was not her place to take her uncle to task.

"I'm sure I hope the money will be found, Uncle Francis."

"So do I, my dear, and soon too. It shall be the better for you when it is. Why Ann left my brother Hugh and you unremembered, never mentioning your names in her will, I cannot tell; but it was very unjust of her, and I shall make it up to you, Edina, in a small way. Frank is to have three thousand pounds when the money turns up, and you shall have the same."

Edina smiled. She thought the promise very safe and very hopeless; though she knew the good-hearted speaker meant what he said.

"Thank you all the same, Uncle Francis, but I do not require any of the money; and I am sure you will have ways and means yourself for every shilling of it, however much it may prove to be. How long does Frank mean to stay abroad?"

"Well, I conclude he is waiting for the money to turn up," said the Major.

"Is it wise of him to stay so long, do you think?"

"I'm sure I don't know. When he gets the money he will return to London and settle down."

And so they chatted on. Mrs. Raynor, who had been lying down with a headache, came out and joined them. The afternoon wore on, and the croquet came to an end. Mr. Stane approached to say good-bye.

"Won't you stay for some dinner?" asked the Major.

"I should like to very much indeed, but I must go home," replied the young man: and once more, as Edina watched the sincere face and heard the earnest tone, she decided that she did like him. "My father particularly desired me to be at home for dinner: he was feeling less well again."

"Then you must stay with us next time," spoke the hospitable Major. And Mr. Stane shook hands around, leaving Alice to the last, and being somewhat longer over it with her than he need have been.

His departure was the sign for a general break-up. Major and Mrs. Raynor went indoors, Charles strolled off with William Stane. Edina retained her place and went on with her work. As Charles strolled back again, he came up and sat down by her.

"What a pity you don't play croquet, Edina! The last game was a good one."

"If I had all my time on my hands as you have, Charley, and nothing to do with it, I might perhaps take up croquet. I can't tell."

"I know what that tone means, Edina. You want to find fault with me for idleness."

"I could find fault with you for a good many things, Charles. The idleness is not the worst."

"What is the worst?" asked Charles, amused.

"You have so changed in these few short weeks, that I ask myself whether you can be the same single-minded, well-intentioned, simple-hearted young people who lived at Spring Lawn. I speak of you and Alice, Charley."

"Circumstances have changed," returned Charles. "Alice"—for the girl at that moment came up to them—"here's Edina saying we have so changed since leaving Bath that she wonders whether we are ourselves or not. *How* have we changed, pray, Edina?"

"Your minds and manners are changing," coolly spoke Edina, beginning to turn down the hem on the other side of the handkerchief. "Do you know what kind of people you put me in mind of now?"

"No. What?"

"Of nouveaux riches."

"For shame, Edina!"

"You do. And I think the world must see you as I see. You are haughty, purse-proud, indifferent."

"Go on," said Charley. "I like to hear it."

Edina did go on. "*You* are the worst, Charles. You seem to think the world was made for you alone. When that poor man came yesterday, a cottager, was he not, asking for some favour or assistance, or complaining of some hardship—I did not rightly catch the words—you just flung him off as though he were not of the same species of created being as yourself; as though he were worth no better than to be trampled underfoot. Have you a bad heart, Charles?"

Charles laughed. "I think I have a very good heart—as hearts go. The man is a troublesome man. His name's Beck. He has been here three times, and wants I don't know what all done to his wretched shell of a cottage; says Mrs. Atkinson promised it. My father can't afford to listen to these complaints, Edina: and if he did it for one, he must do it for all. The fact is, Aunt Ann did so much for the wretches that she spoilt them."

"But you might have spoken kindly to the man. Civilly, at any rate."

"Oh, bother to him!" cried Charley: who was much of a boy yet in his manners. "Only think of all those years of poverty, Edina: we ought to enjoy ourselves now. Why, we had to look at a shilling before we spent it. And did not often get it to spend."

"But, Charley, you think *only* of enjoyment. Nothing is thought of, here at Eagles' Nest, but the pleasure and gratification of the hours, day by day, as the days come round."

"Well, I shall have enough work to do by-and-by, Edina. I go to Oxford after the long vacation."

"And you go without any preparation for it," said Edina.

"Preparation! Why I am well up in classics," cried Charley, staring at Edina.

"I was not thinking of classics. You have had no experience, Charles; you are like a child in the ways of the world."

"I tell you, Edina, I am a fair scholar. What else do you need at Oxford? You don't need experience there."

"Well for you, Charley, if it shall prove so," was Edina's answer, as she folded her work to go indoors; for the evening was drawing on, and the air felt chill. Changed they all were, more than she could express. They saw with one set of eyes, she with another.

"What a tiresome thing Edina is getting!" exclaimed Alice to her brother, as Edina disappeared.

"A regular croaker."

"An old maid."

The only one who could not be said to have changed much, was Mrs. Raynor. She was gentle, meek, simple-mannered as ever: but even she was drawn into the vortex of visiting and gaiety, of show and expense, of parade and ceremony, that had set in. She seemed to have no leisure time to give to anything else. This day was the only

quiet day Eagles' Nest had during the visit of Edina. Mrs Raynor, with her yielding will, could not help herself altogether. But Edina was grieved to see that she neglected the religious training of her young children. Even the hearing of their evening prayers was turned over to the governess.

"Mademoiselle Delrue is a Protestant," said Mrs. Raynor; when, on this same evening, Edina ventured to speak a word upon the subject, as Kate and Robert said good night and left the drawing-room.

"I know she is," said Edina. "But none but a mother should, in these vital matters, train her children. You always used to do it, Mary."

"If you only knew how fully my time and thoughts are occupied!" returned Mrs. Raynor, in a tone of much deprecation. "We live in a whirl here: just that; and it is rather too much for me. And, to tell you the truth, Edina, I sometimes wonder whether the old life, with all its straitened means, was not the happier; whether we have in all respects changed for the better, in coming to Eagles' Nest."

(*To be continued.*)

[Note.—In reply to numerous letters of enquiry, we beg to state that the pronunciation of the leading story now running through the Argosy is not Edeena, but Edīna; the "i" taking its natural English sound.]

PRINCESS ELEANOR.

VI.

IF I have allowed a whole month to pass without writing to you, dearest Amy, do not ascribe it to negligence, but rather to the new occupation I have devoted myself to. New horizons have opened to my sight; new joys have I created for myself. I learn to draw, and that so passionately that you will not comprehend me, because you are not near to watch the progress I make daily.

It was Ernest who first proposed it, because our artist told him I had some talent, and an eye for discerning good from bad. The poor inexperienced youth does not know that ladies are almost all gifted with that faculty. When Ernest asked him if he would teach me he acquiesced enthusiastically. This is all the more incomprehensible to me, as I see that it requires more patience than I can tell you.

Thus I live in the midst of art from morning to night, for the painting of the "Snowdrop" still continues, although the last strokes will be given to it in a very few days. I scarcely find time to drive or ride a few hours daily, and if my brother had not absolutely forbidden it, who knows if my portfolio would not come out in the evening too?

The greater part of the interest I take in this new occupation is certainly owing to Herr Impach's way of teaching. He is not at all pedantic, so that the idea of learning never occurs to me during the lesson. He leaves me to myself, and then changes what is not right without a word of rebuke. Yesterday he gave me my brother's photograph to copy, and, with his help, I have made a drawing of it, which delighted Ernest exceedingly. Indeed, so much so, that in the end I really myself believed that *I* had done it. Perhaps our conversation during the time we drew will interest you.

As he worked, Impach began analysing Ernest's head. He took, one by one, forehead, eyes, nose, mouth, etc., and gave me to understand, that each single part might serve as a model of classical beauty. When, some time after, we spoke with Ernest of my resembling him so much, Impach was asked his opinion, and answered, that he thought me "the idealised image of a perfectly beautiful original!" You will call this an exaggerated compliment; so should I, had anyone but he spoken it; but from his lips, the words sounded as if they had been the judgment of the whole world of artists. It was thus even Ernest took them, who, you know, is decidedly averse to everything in the way of flattery.

Except that once, we avoid all personalities. During the lesson the subject of conversation is mostly art, for which my eyes also light up in enthusiasm. I often think how very poor I was before I knew of this enjoyment, when I only found pleasure by contemplating the outward picture, without thinking of the spirit in which it was painted, and which will henceforth place in my mind a beautiful picture on a level with a masterpiece of literature or music.

And now, Amy, before I close this letter, the great news of to-day which I have left to the last for you, as mothers do with their children's joys.

Yesterday, as I was riding out with Ernest, he asked me suddenly whether I should like to go with him on a visit to Italy.

"The King, Victor Emmanuel, has been so gracious as to invite me to his hunting party, and that in the first days of January. If you think you will enjoy it, and if you would do me a pleasure, then come with me. The days I pass with the King you can remain in Florence, where I shall join you, and then we will travel together to Rome. As I cannot always be with you, we shall have to take cousin Dorothy, or some one else of a respectable age. How do you like my plan, little sister?"

"Are you really going only to shoot with the King?"

"What makes you ask that, dear? I shall certainly seize the opportunity for arranging some important business besides. The principal reason for going, however, is to procure my Eleanor a new pleasure. Is not that very kind of me?" he asked, smiling archly.

That smile told me all sorts of things, which I will confide to you, Amy. I conclude that Ernest goes on some secret mission, which is hidden beneath this shooting party, for yesterday my brother had a long interview with our King.

Fancy how delighted I should have been, in the time we two were still together, at such an opportunity of seeing a new part of the world. Would you believe it that now I did not like the plan at all. I could not pretend to be pleased, and so I told Ernest openly that I felt so happy at home, that I had planned my winter in town, and did not care to leave it. As I was saying this, I suddenly remembered my drawing lessons, and how I should have to interrupt them, and perhaps forget all I had learnt during this long time. I told Ernest so, and he laughed, took my hand, and said :

"What a baby you still are, though you look so tall and imposing! It does not seem very long ago since you would not allow them to put you to bed without your favourite doll in your arms. But, Eleanor, nothing prevents your continuing your lessons. You shall have the first masters in Florence."

Still I was not pleased—to think of an Italian, with his everlasting bows and compliments, who would make me go back to Hubert's landscapes. No! I would rather give up everything. All this I had

thought, not said, and Ernest, without waiting for my answer, continued:

"Or if Impach could come with us, the journey would, in an artistic sense, be of the greatest use to you."

I wonder what could have been the matter with me at that moment. The sun, breaking forth from the clouds that had darkened it till then, must have lighted up the park in golden splendour. All seemed delightful to me from that moment. The galleries in the old Italian palaces, with their innumerable treasures of art, the whole journey, filled me with joyful anticipation.

Ernest was a little surprised at my sudden change of demeanour, but he saw I could not help it. It must be the fatiguing life in town that causes these sudden fits to come upon me.

When we came home, we found Herr Impach at his work as usual. Ernest asked him if he would accompany us, and help us to enjoy the art treasures of Italy better than we could have done without him? He stood hesitating, and as I had decidedly made up my mind not to allow my drawing lessons to be interrupted, I stretched out my hand to him, and cited some words he once said to me:

"Come, Herr Impach, we artists decide the most important questions in life on the impulse of a moment; before taking the most decisive steps, we scarcely reflect for an instant. Is it not so?"

Ernest laughed, and the artist agreed to come with us.

Now that I repeat those words to you, Amy, I am astonished at myself. I did not act or speak thus when we were last together!

I consider all this as coming from the inner conflict of which I told you in my last letter. Although I am not even dreaming of marrying Arsent, still I feel unhappy at the idea that Ernest's wishes should be so decidedly opposed to mine. Were his candidate but Werdan!

And yet, now I think of it, I must confess that I like Werdan just as little as the other. But why? Tell me, Amy, is this a pleasant state of things, when one does not know at all one's own mind? Do you think that I have predispositions for an old maid? Impossible!

Perhaps I shall return with clearer ideas from our Italian journey.

As soon as Ernest has finished some important business, we set out. By that time the picture will be finished. It is such a beauty. All that will be in the beginning of next week. So you may expect an Italian post-mark on the next letter of your

ELEANOR.

VII.

No one, Geoffrey, escapes his destiny! The firm resolution to fly, to banish my mad thoughts of love for ever, was at last taken. I had intended hurrying to your side as soon as ever I could get away. And

now I am coming! But not as I had thought, flying from temptation —no—hand in hand with temptation itself!

The Prince intends travelling in Italy with his sister, and of all mortals it is just *me* they have chosen for their companion. Can I help believing in a destiny from which there is no escaping? Who, I ask you, would have found a good excuse for refusing, when every pulse was beating with the wish to accept? A thought crossed my mind for an instant: I might say that I must go to Spain or England. But it vanished like spray before the wind, when *she* stretched out her soft little hand to me, and imitating my voice, spoke words I had said to her more than three weeks ago. You would not have resisted either.

When I was alone again, and she had taken all the sunshine out of the studio with her, reality presented itself to me in all its most anxious forms.

What will happen to me, when I must bear with her presence daily, hourly?—her presence, which, even now, has a stronger power over me than ever had a patriotic song, a night spent under an Italian sky, or a moonlit sea?

Weak-minded, sophistical, superstitious, have I become, Geoffrey — and all through this fatal love! I have fought bravely, and often, and have been vanquished every time. Now, come what may, I shall not stir a finger, but trust myself to fate. My love will be my destruction any how, so I shall enjoy what is offered me as much and long as I possibly can. *Après moi le déluge!*

If she would only cease looking at me in that sweet manner of hers! Sometimes as if she asked me to unravel life's mysteries; sometimes as if she intended confiding some sorrow to me.

She does not guess what storms these looks raise in my breast. May Heaven prevent her from ever discovering it! It would disturb the holy peace of her pure soul. If you knew how long we are daily together, Geoffrey, you would wonder how I have resisted until now. But she has something so majestic about her, that heaven and earth might disappear, and with them all that separates me from her, still I should not dare to open my mouth.

She is learning to draw. Happy hours, in which I may teach what next to her I love best on earth. And you should hear her scold me, when I do not blame her, but call all she does well done. Then, if I show her how to manage some difficulty, she impatiently takes the pencil out of my hand, and tries to imitate me. At such moments her hand touches mine!—— Geoffrey, what will become of me?

To-morrow evening we start. I have been asked to sleep at the Palace to-night, and am helping the Prince in making the last arrangements. I cannot tell you what a fine, frank nature the Prince's is; and can only be grateful that I was allowed to meet on life's path so noble a man.

You should see his pleasure at the picture I have painted. He has had it placed in Eleanor's boudoir, just over the chair where she usually sits, so that he, on the sofa opposite, can easily compare the copy with the original.

When he thanked me, he pressed my hand, saying:

"You have understood my sister's beauty better than I had expected. I can never sufficiently thank you for this painting."

Although I feel deep veneration for this man, yet sometimes I cannot help doubting whether his principles really are just and right in all things. I feel inclined to ask him something of this kind:

"Have you never for one moment thought how dangerous it may be, to leave two young people to themselves so long, especially when they are brought together by a feeling of sympathy, such as lurks in our mutual admiration for art? And if, confident in the strength of your blood, you have nothing to fear from her, have you considered that for me no such scruples exist; that in me beats a free heart, that will not be taught any difference of rank, and burns with wild fire for aught I may do to extinguish it?"

He thinks too highly of me, to believe me capable of looking at a Waldemberg otherwise than as up to a throne. I believe he is right, and I am the fool. But since I *am* a fool, I will enjoy my present happiness, heedless of the future. Italy shall be the scene of the brightest days of my life—there will I breathe life and happiness at her side during the daytime, and tell you and the stars all about it at night! If I perish afterwards, what matter? I shall have been happy! So come what may, I will risk it! Your friend,

WALTER.

VIII.

The evening of the same day.

You receive another letter from me, Geoffrey. Let me tell you why.

Our departure remains fixed for to-morrow; but this afternoon the old Countess Henkel having called here, insisted on Eleanor's waiting until her ball had taken place. The Prince politely but decidedly refused, and so the old lady had to be content that Eleanor, accompanied by her brother, should spend the evening with her. I escorted them both to the carriage, where, with her foot on the step, Eleanor made me more than happy, by giving me her hand and saying: "How we shall enjoy ourselves to-morrow!" A moment after they drove off. It is the first evening for a long time, Geoffrey, that I have spent without her. As I became acquainted with the circle of their friends, the invitations extended to me, and so it is that all my evenings have been rendered bright by her dear presence. How lonely I feel in my room to-night! Solitude, that formerly I used to cherish so much, is

quite insupportable now, and I will not go to rest until I have heard the wheels of the carriage which brings her safely back to this roof.

Forgive your friend—if for once he is writing to you not for the sake of having a quiet chat with you, but because he has nothing better to do. I have tried to read and draw; my fancy pictures to me nothing but her lovely face, in my ears sounds her melodious voice. In writing to you I may think of her, may sometimes draw her name on the paper, and that will somewhat console me.

Do not fear that I shall give you a second edition of to-day's letter. I will speak of other subjects for a while; will remember what happened during the last days; will try to think that besides herself and me there is still a world extant.

A few days ago, as I was giving the last finishing touches to my picture, the door opened and Count Werdan unexpectedly walked in. I do not know whether he had been forbidden to enter the studio; he had certainly never set foot in it before. Having looked at the picture through his eye-glass for some time, he said, with a self-conceited smile:

"A charming girl! What roundness, and yet all is delicacy—a rare beauty! And how well you have painted her. You have flattered her, and yet caught the resemblance. Pray, accept my sincere thanks!"

He dared to thank me, because in feeble colours I had drawn my ideal's image on the canvas! It was quite revolting, was it not, Geoffrey? I asked him, as I quietly went on painting:

"Has Prince Ernest destined this picture as a present to you?"

"No! What makes you ask?"

"Because you thank me for it!"

"Oh you must not take my words in too literal a sense," he said, coming closer to me. "I spoke from a sort of family feeling—you know I have intentions. Some day or other I must marry, and Princess Eleanor is really charming."

That to me, Geoffrey!

"You are a very nice young man," he began again, in spirits raised somewhat by champagne, I should think. "You are a very nice young man, and your picture proves it. Having made yourself indispensable in this house does not prove to the contrary, either. You see that I am *bon enfant*, and do not bear you the least grudge for having made me play a ridiculous figure the day you rode Ali. A propos, where on earth did you learn to ride so well?"

"On my father's horses, Count Werdan."

He bit his lips, but gained composure to say:

"Ah! just like myself! What a way you have of taking everything amiss. You really have no reason for doing so. Supposing you saw me paint beautifully, would it not be very natural if you asked the question: Where have you learnt that?"

"That is not at all the same thing. One can be exclusively an artist, and yet break in a horse, for that is done with a little courage. But to be exclusively a good waltzer and rider, and a first-rate artist besides, that I do not think possible."

"You do not? That brings me to the point, for which I came here this afternoon. A very vulgar proverb says: 'When you are in Rome, do as the Romans do!' That proverb I have applied to my case; and intend acting accordingly. My purpose at present is to please Princess Eleanor in every way. The first thing to establish is sympathy in all her likings. For some time Princess Eleanor has been going into ecstacies before every torn, old piece of canvas. Let me go into ecstacies also, I said to myself, and so firmly did I plant myself before a picture at the Exhibition that I could scarcely be torn away from it. That was well so far. But now Princess Eleanor has taken to drawing with passion. What is left me, but also to devote myself to art? Conversations on that subject are the only ones that fix her attention. You are the very man, Herr Impach, to help me in this difficult business. Teach me the beginnings; the result we obtain is quite indifferent to me, so long as I have a few of the professional expressions."

"You do me too much honour, if you think I can teach you drawing so easily," I said, more calmly than I had expected of myself.

"As if I did not know that it is you who inspired Princess Eleanor with this new mania! Apply the same means to me, which have obtained such brilliant results with her!"

"Do you know that I leave Berlin in a few days?"

"You leave Berlin? Perhaps in the Prince and Princess Eleanor's company? Ha, ha! Why was this kept a secret from me?"

I gave no answer, and he may have seen that he had no right to expect one. He must have thought that to make bonne mine à mauvais jeu was the best he could do; so he said at last:

"Your heart must be riveted somewhere with iron chains, or you would not dare to come too much in contact with so fascinating a beauty as Princess Eleanor. Are you married?"

"No!" I answered, for the first time looking up from my work. The Count's face wore a malicious, spiteful expression, as if he meant to say "Wait until I am master here; I will show you out soon enough!"

But perhaps considering that that time had not yet come, and that I was at present in favour, he took my hand in the most friendly manner possible, pressed it, and wished me a happy journey.

"I shall see you again," he concluded, "and much sooner than you expect; as quickly as I can, I intend to follow you all. I hope that something more congenial to my nature than drawing will be en vogue by that time."

Another pressure of the hand, and he left me to myself.

No, Geoffrey! Eleanor will never accept this man's hand. You can imagine that in her presence he never shows himself in the light I have had the honour of seeing him. When Eleanor is in the room, Count Werdan is enthusiasm from head to foot.

Still I know her too well to have a doubt as to her finding out this man's utter heartlessness. Look, Geoffrey, if I were not as sure of that as I am of myself, I should not love her as I do. I have not the least anxiety on this point, and the others are not clever enough to attract her attention. Of course she might marry according to her brother's advice alone, but I scarcely think she ever will. Still, if she did ——

Geoffrey, as long as our journey lasts, I shall be sure to have her to myself; I will not lose her before we return!

. . . . . I hear carriage-wheels rolling in the court-yard—'tis she. I must hurry on to the landing, where, unobserved, I can see her graceful figure glide up the stairs, where I can hear her soft voice whisper, "Good-night, Ernest." I will fancy that she said *Walter* instead!

She has never as yet pronounced my name? Why should she? . . .

Can you imagine, Geoffrey, my happiness in being allowed to reside under the same roof with her? Your friend,

WALTER.

IX.

TURIN, *December* 186–.

Dearest Eleanor,—I have this moment returned from a circle of agreeable, clever men, and will now keep my promise to you, and relate all that has happened during the last few days. It is possible that I may be detained here a little longer than I had at first anticipated. Not without some anxiety did I leave you, my darling sister; for although I know you are in safe hands, still I prefer having you under my own care, especially in a strange country. I can, however, perfectly comprehend your wish to leave Turin for Florence. The first time we visit Italy, we are all irresistibly drawn southwards!

I found the King in Turin, where two aides-de-camp of his were waiting to receive me at the station, and take me to the palace.

The impression made upon me by the chivalrous monarch, whom I had not seen for more than fifteen years, was a very pleasing one indeed. Do not picture to yourself a man brought up in all the formalities of a Court, but the true old knight of olden times. I suppose the Italians respect him from the very contrast with their own formal, studied manners. Although not so tall as I, he is still of an imposing figure, all strength and power, with sparkling eyes, and a brave, bold bearing.

With outstretched hands, he walked up to me, bade me heartily welcome, and asked how *you* were, whose far-famed beauty, he said, he had heard of. This praise will not make you vain, Eleanor?

I dined at Court that evening with several of the ministers and generals. The king did not take an active part in the dinner, except by eating his Piedmontese "Grissini" (long, thin canes made of bread). As ladies usually interest themselves in domestic matters, I may as well tell you at once what I was told afterwards. The King has transplanted his habits of the chase and camp, to the royal palace, and usually dines alone. Walking up and down his room, he devours half a dozen cutlets, and drinks a bottle of sour red Piedmontese wine. If he honours his guests by appearing at table, he only takes part at the entertainment in the way above-mentioned.

Long after the other guests were departed I remained with the King. It was then he gave me all the advice necessary for our next day's hunting.

In a carriage drawn by four English horses (for riding the King uses Arabian ones, beautiful specimens of which he receives from the Viceroy and Sultan) we reached the lonely castle in the Graian Alps. These and a part of Spain are almost the only places where the steinbock (ibex) is still to be found. In the Alps of Switzerland and the Tyrol it is nearly extinct. It is only owing to Victor Emmanuel's enthusiastic love of sport that these fine animals still exist in a number of about six or seven hundred in the Italian mountains.

I had expected a sort of battue, as we have it when chamois-hunting with Duke Ernest of Coburg in the Tyrol, or in the Bavarian Highlands with King Maximilian. Here we had nothing of the kind. I shall always remember with pleasure our sport on the hunting grounds of King Max round the Königssee. With him both mind and body were in turn exercised. He assembled around his table poets and savants, as well as sporting and other guests. Once I saw there Ranke and Sybel, Liebig, Geibel, Paul Heyse, and Kaulbach. The conversation, led by King Max himself, surged high, and touched on all the most important interests of humanity, while Rhein-wine and punch kept the throats from becoming dry. Next morning we all started for Berchtesgaden. In a hut built expressly for the purpose, we passed the night, during which time the foresters and beaters were occupied in driving together the chamois. Sometimes twenty or thirty were killed, and not a few by the King's own hand. But the disagreeable part of the chasse is the watching for hours and hours from the same post, so that often one trembles with cold, or yawns from tediousness at the very moment when the shot ought to be made. Naught of all this at Victor Emmanuel's hunting party. We started almost alone; that is to say, in the company of a few aides-de-camp and two or three of the foresters.

I had brought the King two "needle-guns," the best ever made in our royal manufactory. He was quite delighted with them, and seemed impatient to try their range and precision, the rapidity of their fire being already beyond all doubt.

Early in the morning, after a short consultation with the head-ranger, the King assigned to every one his task and place. Some men were ordered to a certain place of meeting, with baskets of provisions. The aides-de-camp and foresters divided into two parties, and went right and left, the King and myself, with only one man, who carried our guns, going straight on into a narrow path that ascended the mountain. Victor Emmanuel wore a short velvet jacket; I our Bavarian "Joppe." We each of us had our gun slung over our back and a long mountain-staff in our hands; the dogs to our right and left. So we gradually mounted the rocky path, as the sun began to appear from behind the snowy peaks of the Valais mountains, and gilded the summits around us.

It was quite astonishing how the King, with all his corpulency, marched on before, with the greatest ease and lightness. We soon left the last forests behind us, and began climbing up, between masses of rock, and over fields of snow and ice. From time to time, as we rested a little to regain our breath, the King took out his pocket-glass, with which he surveyed the heights. Sometimes we heard the sharp whistle of the hoary marmot, or saw some of the funny little animals caper about in front of their cover, and disappear as soon as the dogs approached them. We now came to a steep gorge, through which deep furrows ran; these again had been almost covered by snowdrifts, on which we discovered footprints. On close inspection the hunter declared them to be a recent track of steinbock.

After another hour's climbing, the King suddenly beckoned to me to come close to him, and giving me his glass, pointed to a few black spots visible on the top of a distant rock, and against the background of a projecting glacier. One look through the glass showed me what we had so long sought for. Three steinbocks were grazing on a green spot of the crag. Notwithstanding the great distance which separated us, I could see how the largest threw back his beautiful horns, which were more than a hand's breadth, and quite a yard long, and then began looking about him distrustfully. The animals had most probably caught the sound of the stones which, dislodged by our feet, went rolling down the rocks, and bounding from crag to crag, sought the deep valley below. Still they had not seen us, for they remained in the same place.

The King now ordered the forester who accompanied us, to get round to the other side of them and to try and drive them towards us. In the meantime on we climbed, always trying to conceal ourselves from view, so that sometimes we were obliged to crawl on hands and feet. The forester's task was a very difficult one, for he had to climb up the narrow bed of a mountain stream. After half an hour, during which time we had

impatiently waited in all sorts of hiding-places, afraid of every rolling stone which might betray us, we saw the man's head rise from behind the rock, as he approached nearer and nearer to where the unconscious animals were still grazing. At last we were close enough to choose a favourable aim. During the last ascent we had discovered that the position occupied by the quarry was more favourable than we had at first expected. The crag on which the animals stood was separated from the glacier by a hollow, more than twenty feet broad. They therefore had no escape except by the very pass in which we stood. The King's face, red with the fresh mountain breeze and the exertion, shone brightly when he saw how things stood. He told me to be ready to fire. "The game is distant," he said, "but a bullet will reach it. Show me, now, what excellent marksmen you Germans are."

A little more climbing, and then the King drew a small whistle from his pocket, and put it to his mouth. Only a few seconds afterwards, the heads of the steinbock appeared over the edge of the cliff—they were looking round to ascertain where the danger came from. The forester shouted, and, with a precipitous headlong leap, the largest of the animals flew in the direction of the glacier. But the King had followed its movement with his rifle—a loud detonation, and the animal rolled into the hollow, having scarcely touched the opposite side with its feet. My shot then followed, and hit the second steinbock, which was trying to follow the first. But when it had reached the edge of the glacier it got up again, and tried to climb higher, to a place which the third had already reached by a prodigious spring. But several balls put an end to both their lives.

I was so excited at our good luck in having killed these rare animals that I could not refrain from hurrying to the place where they lay, although I tore my hands severely by holding on to the sharp rocks. The King followed more leisurely.

The forester brought the animals to us, not without danger to himself. When we all three stood around them, the King tried to ascribe all the honours of the day to me, but as he could not deny having killed the first, he at least insisted on my taking two of the animals. He means to have them stuffed for me, and I think with delight of the day when your look of admiration will rest on these beautiful specimens. They are somewhat larger than our chamois, and with all the enormous weight of their horns, which from the top of the head reach backwards in a most elegant curve, they are more daring, and leap farther even than do chamois. Their skin is grey, and shaggier than that of the latter.

The King sent the huntsman for people to carry home the spoil, and led the way to the place of rendezvous.

How shall I describe our delicious walk home? Over snowy paths, past the Alps that were still glowing in the sun, through pine woods,

and oak forests. Our conversation often changed from earnest to gay, but it was always interesting. Sometimes we passed through ravines where we were obliged to hold on to each other for safety, and could see scarcely a speck of blue sky above us. At one moment we felt the icy breath of a glacier, at the next the warm air of the South.

Whilst I was beginning to feel tired and worn out, the royal hunter still walked on before me, more dauntless than ever. I was delighted when at last a glade opened to our view, where the whole company was assembled, and greeted us with loud cheering.

Victor Emmanuel's guests were seated round a large fire, all merrily conversing, and sprang to their feet as we approached.

The baskets with provisions were now unpacked, and we all drew round the fire.

"I think I know you well enough," the King said to me, "to be sure that you will not take offence if we treat you as a good hunter, sénza complimenti."

With these words he took a fowl out of the basket, and holding it by one leg, motioned to me to take the other. I did so, and he pulled it into two parts, whilst he laughed, and said :

"Now a glass of our red wine, and you have a meal preferable to all your 'diners parés.'"

This, Eleanor, was my day with Victor Emmanuel. As he was in the chase, so I found him in council—valiant and judicious—worthy of leading a highly-gifted people.

And what have you done during this time, my darling? I hope to receive the answer to this question from your own lips, for if I can make it possible, I shall be with you the day after to-morrow.

Before I retire I must answer a letter I received to-day. It is from Arsent, who begs permission to enjoy Italy's sun at our side. As I have no right to tell him where to go, or where not, I shall answer in the affirmative, although I am almost sure it is not an Italian sun for which he comes to Italy.

No wonder, when your brother himself is dying to look into your sweet blue eyes again.

Good-bye, my child! Let art beguile the time until I am with you again.

Your Brother.

X.

Dearest Amy,—I have spent a week such as I have never spent before in my life, in Danté's native town, on Raphael's paternal soil, in the charming city of flowers.

The hours flew by as in a golden dream; all was joy and ecstacy. Never in all my life have I been for one moment so happy as I was un-

interruptedly for this whole week. Were my dream not over, and I again awake to reality, you might long wait for a letter from me.

How I *could* be so inexpressibly happy, in the absence of my brother, I cannot even now conceive, for at home I used to think the time endless until he came home from the Reichstag.

But you do not even know how it came to pass that he left me alone for so long a time. Let me tell you. Notwithstanding all Cousin Dorothy's fussiness, we managed to get away on the day appointed for our departure. By the Brenner and Milan we were to reach Turin as soon as possible. Ernest had proposed only taking his secretary, one valet, and Fanny, who would manage to do both for me and Cousin Dorothy. In the train Ernest almost incessantly dictated letters to his secretary, for which purpose they sat apart from us. Herr Impach and I had to look for company to Cousin Dorothy. If you did not know her but too well, I could never succeed in describing how she behaved. Herr Impach's natural gallantry to an old lady, she ascribes entirely to her irresistible charms. She bestows on him so many tender looks, that a less delicate young man could not possibly repress his mirth. Had he given way but once, I am sure I could not have helped laughing also, but all the esteem and regard I have for him would have been considerably diminished.

As we prepared for passing the night in the railway carriage, Ernest came, with his touching care for me, and wrapped me up in furs and shawls, as if I had still been his little child. Cousin Dorothy, who, like myself, would not hear of a bed, tried to settle herself as comfortably as she could. Just as she was ready, Herr Impach entered the carriage, and she motioned him to take the place at her side, with a gesture as though she had bestowed a kingdom upon him. Herr Impach accepted the position with a bow of gratitude, which required all Cousin Dorothy's simplicity not to be thought ironical.

As we started, I bent down to look after my footstool, which was inconveniently low, but could not be changed. Some time afterwards, I fancied my feet felt much warmer, and in a more comfortable position. That it was no fancy I detected next morning, when I saw that Herr Impach had put his feet under the stool to raise it, and had kept them there all night. His beseeching look let me understand that he did not wish me to mention the circumstance to the others. How uncomfortable he must have been for many hours!

We passed the next day in a charming little valley, the name of which I cannot recall just now. Ernest had received a packet of letters; Cousin Dorothy was resting from the fatigues of the night; and nothing was left for me to do but sit on the balcony of the little inn and look at the mountains, which lay around me in an amphitheatre. The desire to mount one of the hills, at least, became stronger every moment, and I may have looked quite miserable at being obliged

to sit in the sunshine, with the last yellow leaves of a vine over my head, on that fine wintry day.

All at once Ernest approached me.

"Are you melancholy, my sister? You look like a little bird locked up in a cage, that would for all the world like to soar up into the sunshine. But see, darling, I cannot come out with you. The post will be off soon, and I must finish some business before it goes. Why will you not go in Herr Impach's company? He was here a moment ago, to ask me if I required his services, as he intended making a little excursion to those hills."

"May I, Ernest?" I joyfully asked, and quicker than a roe I bounded out of the room to ask Fanny for my hat and cloak.

As I returned to the sitting-room, Herr Impach was already standing sentinel at the door, with my parasol and a plaid on his arm.

How describe that delightful walk, Amy? On rough paths, over stones and grass plots, we mounted gradually higher, until at last we reached the ridge of a mountain. The artist had begged me not to look round during our two hours' ascent; now I enjoyed such a view as I had never seen in my whole life before.

By studying art, I have not only learnt to appreciate the picture created by man's hand. From nature also a veil has been drawn, with which my ignorance had covered it.

I have seen a hundred points of view more famed for beauty than this panorama of the Alps; but not one has ever filled me with more genuine admiration, with more perfect delight, more enthusiastic feelings.

As I gazed upon the green pasture land, animated with cottages and grazing cattle, and the winding course of the mountain stream, which, at the distance it was from us, glittered like silver—at the sight of all this, one thought alone filled my mind: How beautiful is this wide world of ours! And as we continued on our way—to our right the high fir trees, to our left the abyss, into which I dared not look—I felt so happy—so happy—I could have sung and shouted like a gleeful child.

With untiring care and attention Herr Impach was walking at my side, as if it would have cost him his life had I sprained my foot, or had only a cone from a fir fallen upon my head. I suppose it was because he watched me so carefully that our conversation consisted of monosyllables.

We came to a clearing where a group of trees formed a frame round a lovely little picture. I sighed from fatigue (in all my life I had not taken so long a walk), and Herr Impach spread the plaid on a stone all overgrown with moss and ivy. When I had sat down, I pointed to the place at my side, and he eagerly took possession of it. I could not help thinking of Cousin Dorothy, and the ridiculous bow with which he had accepted *her* offer.

"Draw this little view, will you?" I asked, after a few minutes' silent contemplation.

He drew out his pocket-book and pencil, looking all the while dreamily at the landscape before us. He made a few unmeaning, wavering lines, and as I looked impatiently at him, he lifted his eyes to mine with a beseeching glance. Then he said:

"I cannot draw at this moment, if it were to save my life. I promise not to forget one feature of this view, and will make you an exact picture of it. Only do not ask it of me just now!"

What on earth could be the matter with him? Surely I had a greater right to feel tired after our long walk than he—a strong man. I took the pencil and paper from his hand, and began myself a sketch of the charming place. Would you believe, Amy, that I was not a bit less awkward than he? I gave him back his book, and confessed candidly:

"I feel the same as you. I suppose we have seen and enjoyed too much, so that the feeble means of rendering our impressions are insufficient. We will let it be."

With all my good will, I could not speak those words in a playful tone.

We were silent again. Our walk had taken us far away. The sun began gradually to approach the western horizon. As the insect is drawn to the light, so were my eyes immovably fastened on the glowing sky. Not a single detail of the beautiful illumination did I allow to escape me. I knew not whether the artist looked in the same direction. I was so absorbed that I started up, when he whispered, "Look!" in my ear. My eyes met his, which were shining as in tears; then I followed the direction he pointed to, and gazed behind me. How shall I tell you, Amy, what I saw? The long chain of the Alps in full glow, the snow changed into a rosy mass, to be compared only with the sunset clouds above them. I had never beheld anything so beautiful, and stood silently gazing at all that splendour. When I looked round for my companion, I saw him standing close beside me, his eyes rivetted upon me, as if enjoying the impression beautiful nature made upon me.

And now, Amy, I come to what I blush to tell you, although were all to happen over again, I should act in just the same way once more. What made me feel so, I do not know; all I can say is that it seemed to me for a moment as if I owed all my delight to him alone: as if without him there would be no Alps, no sunshine, on earth. In a moment of overflowing happiness I took one of his hands in both mine, and looked gratefully into his eyes. Was it my fault if two large, heavy tears at the same instant started from my eyes and rolled slowly down my cheeks? I had scarcely released his hand when he turned aside, and did not come back until it was time to return home. The

whole way back we never once broke silence, and he did not even offer me his arm at difficult passages, but walked backwards, on before me, watching every step of mine. When we returned home, he became very talkative, and at dinner spoke of a hundred things: of chamois-hunting, and Alpine life; but of our excursion he said not a word. Was it not strange that I, too, answered all Cousin Dorothy's questions on that subject, by saying:

"Oh, very nice! A pity you did not come with us."

What a hypocrite I am! I knew perfectly well that she would have spoilt all my enjoyment of nature.

* * * * * * * *

I must break off; it is getting late; and I promise you my Florentine idyll for another time.

Ever your

ELEANOR.

XI.

Dear Geoffrey,—Although, in reality, quite near you, I am further rom you and my goal than I ever was.

If the new tone of my letters has made you sometimes smile, from this moment, Geoffrey, smile no longer, for could you look into your friend's heart you would be horrified! I am happy in being here, and at the same moment wish myself thousands of miles away. In one breath I bless and regret the day on which I consented to travel with them.

If living in the same house as she made me happy, fancy what I felt when allowed to pass day and night in the same railway carriage with her. Prince Ernest was obliged to occupy himself with dictating letters all day, and that ridiculous old Cousin Dorothy sleeps almost the whole time, so we were allowed to talk together as long as we liked. If this cousin had not the privilege of being a relation of Eleanor's, I should laugh at her outright. As it is, I consider her one of the necessary evils, without which I cannot see Eleanor; still more insupportable than the thick veil which hides her face from me, but less detestable than the host of admirers that are continually at our heels.

. . . . . Geoffrey, there lies a village in a valley of the Alps, perhaps less beautifully situated than a hundred others—yet to me it is a priceless jewel, in a beautiful shrine. For there I was allowed, for the first time, to saunter with her alone through mountain and vale. Do not ask me how this came about. I know nothing besides this—that I have sat with her on a moss-grown stone, that we have looked at nature's wonders together, that she in her delight caught hold of my hand, and—do you hear, Geoffrey?—actually shed tears, without any apparent cause. Those were the tears that I have been praying for so

long; they cool the burning pain of my heart, but they no sooner rise than they are lost and dried up in the desert of my despair!

What must I think, Geoffrey? For one moment a sort of frenzy came over me. I thought—You are no longer the poor artist to her; you are the creator of new joys, of new happiness. But I remembered all in time; and so long as her moist eyes were fixed on mine, not a movement betrayed what passed within me. Yet I felt as though I had tasted a new cup of happiness. I scarcely knew what I said or did all that evening.

We only stayed one day in Turin, and according to Eleanor's wish, hurried on to Florence. There Prince Ernest left us to return to Turin, where he had some important business to transact. Eleanor was left in charge of me and Cousin Dorothy.

Then followed such days, Geoffrey! Everywhere I accompanied her; on *my* arm she first saw the art treasures of modern Athens; *my* words introduced her to a new world full of beauty and delight.

But when the cup is full, the smallest pebble dropping into it is enough to make it overflow.

We had spent a whole afternoon in the Pitti Palace, and the Madonna del Granduca pleased Eleanor so much that she declared she could no longer be without at least a photograph of the lovely figure. As we returned home, I took her to a shop, from which she could scarcely be torn away again, to the despair of poor Cousin Dorothy, who would already have fallen asleep at the gallery, had the chairs not offered obstinate resistance. After having bought three albums, Eleanor at last declared herself satisfied, and drove home with the happiest face in the world.

She was to dine out with her cousin that evening, and as it was five o'clock by the time we reached home, she went directly to her toilet. I had just sat down to write, when a servant called me to the sitting-room. All the doors stood open, and I had scarcely entered, when I heard Eleanor calling:

"Pray, Herr Impach, come here for a moment. You have not told me anything of this picture, and it is quite charming!"

I followed the sound of the voice, which I expected would lead me to a small boudoir. My feet stood rooted to the threshold, when I saw the glow of lights from her toilet-table. In a long, transparent dress, she sat on a low easy chair, her golden hair streaming down on all sides, whilst her maid, Fanny, was preparing to take possession of it. On Eleanor's lap rested the album we had bought; her feet reposed on a soft stool. Cousin Dorothy lay on the sofa in deep sleep.

Impatient at my long tarrying, she turned her head, and with an imperious movement of her hand, motioned me to her side, but with it also called back my senses. "Spaniel again, my friend," I said to

myself; "nought but a spaniel." Those tears fell owing to the glow of the Alps alone.

"What is this?" she asked.

"A Madonna by Carlo Dolci."

"And this?—And this?"

As I bent down to see better, she looked round the room for a seat; but before Fanny had time to bring a chair, the pretty feet had pushed the stool from them, and an inimitable motion of the hand spoke p ainer than words could have done:

"Lie down, spaniel."

But how happy was I to obey; and yet how ridiculous I may have looked I can easily imagine, for it was the first time I had ever sat at the feet of a woman; nay, the first time my foot had passed the threshold of a lady's dressing-room.

Fanny was by this time intent upon her duties, and Eleanor amused herself by attentively studying each picture of the album, and making me write the names under each with a little pencil she gave me.

We were at the end before the lady's-maid had done half her work; so she was ordered to bring another album, which I was told also to look through.

With capricious amiability she told me the names of all the persons it contained. I am sure half the Gotha Almanack sounded in my ears, while she accompanied each name by a merry remark, or "I dislike *this* one!—So fond of *him!*"

The maid had left the room with an excuse I did not hear; and stayed away. The last page of the album had been turned over; it was closed, and her soft white hands rested on it; whilst the eyes looked dreamily into space. I dare not move, but sat as if spellbound, when she spoke, more to herself than to me:

"Is it not sad, to have no one on earth to care for, except my brother? I have this whole book full of cousins, but for most of them I care less than for some casual acquaintance. Oh! if only I had a sister, how I should love her!"

"Had you not your parents?" I ventured to ask.

"My father died before my birth; my mother I scarcely remember, she followed him so soon to the grave. This is her picture."

She opened a small locket, which, from a golden chain, hung on her neck. As I was admiring the picture of her beautiful mother, she opened the other half of the small heart, and took from it a lock of hair.

So far, Geoffrey, I am sure of what I say; but what happened now I cannot tell whether I dreamed, or whether it be reality.

I felt her soft hand holding the relic of her mother on my head, as if she were comparing the colour of the hair with mine. Then her other hand pressed back my forehead, and with a wondrous look she said:

"My mother must have been as good as you are!"

Geoffrey, the hardest steel will not resist, when too much bent. Had I risked life and everlasting happiness, I could not have acted differently.

Taking her hands in both mine with a hasty movement, I covered them with kisses; not one of the slight fingers remained untouched by my lips. Then, like an offender who has profaned a sacred thing, I flew out of the room, not even daring to look at my soul's light once more.

XII.

That same night I packed my trunk. I had heard that Prince Ernest was expected next day, so I knew that I did not leave her unprotected. The resolve to come to you, Geoffrey, was taken. Without saying good-bye, secretly as a thief in the night, I left the hotel next morning. I was angry with humanity for having created circumstances which rendered it impossible to an honest man in my position, nay, would make it a crime, if he tried to obtain the woman he loved. I was angry with her brother for having placed me in this position; angry with you, Geoffrey, for not having packed me off to Rome a long while ago; angry with myself for having like an idiot been caught in the trap I had myself set. Only with her—my angel—I could not find it in my heart to be displeased. She only followed the noble instincts of her heart, which revealed her a true friend to me. Could I not have been content with that?

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I stood on the platform, watching for the train, fearful lest my resolve might weaken, when at last I heard the shrill whistle of the engine. But at the same moment a soft voice sounded from the opposite side.

It was *she*, on the arm of her cousin. Stretching out her hand to me, she said:

"Here you are? We have looked for you everywhere. Why did you not come with us to meet my brother? Oh, there he is!"

An exclamation of joy, and she lay in his arms.

Tell me candidly Geoffrey, would you have left in that train?

Now I will no longer fly; not if *one* step could save me from destruction. Fate has decreed it so.

Eleanor, into whose eyes I was afraid to look, seems scarcely to recollect what happened the previous evening. I think she ascribes my conduct to the extravagance which people in her station of life always attribute to artists.

How glad am I, not to have obeyed the impulse of the moment, but to have stayed. Even if I had found a good excuse for my capricious behaviour, how soon would love and jealously have driven me back,

had I heard that Count Werdan, and a fellow-sufferer of mine, a Prince Arsent, had arrived in Florence. The latter of the two, little as his chance may be, is favoured by Prince Ernest. Although I have nothing to gain, yet I will not willingly give way to these. To all my sufferings this one has yet to be numbered—being present when a decision, one way or the other, will be taken. And I had so fondly hoped that I should have Eleanor to myself alone during all this journey. Geoffrey, am I not an ungrateful wretch? I have been happy for one moment, a thousand times happier than I had ever dared to dream of! Has she not bent her lovely face over me? Has not her golden hair laid on my cheeks, and forehead? Have I not been allowed to kiss her hands—not with a bow at the threshold of a ball-room, but alone with her, in all the fire of a first love? And she did not express discontent by a single look!

Still, Geoffrey, she is not the same since those two friends have arrived. With them returned the light gay tone of the world, which we had banished since the beginning of the journey. Although their talk is thoughtless and foolish, still their chattering is scarcely for a moment stopped. The Count I sometimes even envy for his rare talent in brilliantly leading a conversation, for to him Eleanor not unfrequently listens with real pleasure. I have seen that Art and I are no longer indispensable to her; we only form an agreeable accessory. The Prince watches this change with a quiet smile, as something he had long foreseen.

My presence is now required for about an hour every morning; the rest of the time I am at liberty. So I have resolved to copy Titian's "Biondo" for the Prince, who calls it his favourite picture. To-morrow morning I shall begin. Very curious am I to see if nothing will be said about my continued absences.

Farewell for the present. If matters continue to go on as they do now, you may expect frequent letters from me.

Should the happiest time of my life have passed for ever, still I can be content and at least say, "I, too, have been in Arcadia."

Your friend,

WALTER.

(*To be continued.*)

WILD FLOWERS IN FIELD LANE.

By Anne Beale.

FIELD LANE! Do not those words, at this springtide of the year, suggest green meadows where the nodding cowslip grows, and hawthorn-hedges overshadowing the primrose and violet? And does not its neighbour, Little Saffron Hill, call up before the imagination a wealth of golden crocuses expanding in the sunlight? These spots lie near that in which Sir Christopher Hatton planted his celebrated gardens, and where, therefore, wild and cultivated flowers bloomed side by side. Shall we visit them?

Field, lane, hill, gardens, are now one dingy mass of dreary houses, with nothing but their names to recall the country sights, sounds, and scents of other days. But the wild flowers are still there, only transformed into the human plants of the world's vast fields. They are sadly soiled and faded; still, means are at hand to revive them. In their midst rises a large conservatory, where stunted wildling shoots may be nurtured into blossoms, and withered, full-grown plants pruned and watered to renewed life and vigour.

On the face of this conservatory, in letters large and clear, are the words "Field Lane Ragged Schools, and Refuge for the Homeless Poor. Supported by Voluntary Contributions." Spreading around it, far beyond human sight or knowledge, are the wildernesses that supply it with waste seeds, roots, or weed-like flowers, for cultivation or restoration. The most fanciful of gardeners could never have imagined so intricate a labyrinth, or laid out such complicated beds. Hot-beds, alas, of destitution, vice, and misery!

This building is so high that it seems to command the field, and its score of windows look like so many benevolent eyes surveying the incessant influx and reflux at its ever-open doors. Some five-and-thirty years ago it was preceded by foul, ill-ventilated stables, which were converted by a few good people into receptacles for homeless human beings swarming in the neighbourhood. Even this shelter was better than none, and was nightly crowded with the destitute. But in 1858 a series of articles in *The Times*, called "Our Homeless Poor," aroused the rich to a sense of their responsibility, and a portion of the £12,000 that flowed rapidly in, was devoted to Field Lane, and enabled its friends to take buildings spacious enough to accommodate the multitudes of poverty-stricken men and women who asked for a night's lodging for which they had no means of paying elsewhere. And none were turned away. The shelter and the crust were given to all who craved them.

But in a few years an all-potent railway company demanded the

premises. Rapidity of locomotion must be obtained whatever the misery to individuals: and the refuge was doomed. Thousands of poor, who boast at least a sort of home, are turned adrift in this way; the houseless suffer with them. Again the *Times* fund availed to rescue the homeless and outcast from despair. By its aid the plain, strong building before which we stand, was erected, and opened by Lord Shaftesbury on the 6th of June, 1866. It was the first suitable and Permanent Refuge for the Homeless—Ragged School, and Ragged Church—built in London, and no words can tell the work done in the last ten years. The word *permanent* was used unadvisedly. Nothing is permanent here below—not even so strong and useful an abode as this. Its site is now required for the formation of a new street, and the place that has received and benefited tens of thousands of our fellow creatures, must come down. Ground has been purchased for a second Refuge in Leather Lane, but it is feared that the compensation offered by the Metropolitan Board of Works will scarcely meet the outlay; and the *Times* fund has been long exhausted. Let us hope that new funds may accumulate, not only for the new building, but for the maintenance of the vast machinery at work in the old. We will inspect it before its hospitable walls are no more, and the machinery is removed.

On one side are the Ragged School doors, on the other those of the male and female refuges. We will enter by the latter, and mount first to the top of the building. Although it is early, patient women are already standing in the passages waiting for admission, while one is earnestly entreating protection for a grandchild, ill-treated by its father and step-mother. Ascending many flights of broad stone steps, blackened by the coming and going of thousands of dirty shoes or shoeless feet, we pause on each landing to catch the sounds of the young voices, repeating lessons or singing hymns. We reach the top-most room at an opportune and solemn moment. Four or five hundred boys and girls are on their knees, repeating aloud the Lord's Prayer.

When the children rise from their knees and file out, we remark that they are not all quite of the ragged class, and learn that this room is let during the week for a Board School, and thus combines the ragged and the decent. They are fortunate in having the same teachers as they had before the ragged school was swallowed up by the board, and in having religious knowledge instilled into their young minds with secular. It will doubtless soon be apparent to everyone that, unless religion is the foundation, the superstructure must fall. Here, happily, it lies at the base of each separate work, and so it will assuredly last. If the large room in which we now stand is the seat of general learning during the week day, it is dedicated to God on the Sunday, and in the evenings, and we will hope that in the course of time every Board School throughout the land will be thus used.

This room, capable of seating a thousand persons, was built for a ragged church—the first in London: they are now numerous—and every Sabbath day it holds a strange and affecting congregation. Let anyone who would learn into what depths human nature can sink from misery, folly, or crime, come here at eleven o'clock some Sunday morning. He will see several hundreds of his fellow-creatures creep or shamble in, who are brought so low by poverty, or so degraded by sin, that they would not venture elsewhere. Rough, despondent, half-clad men, and shame-faced, drooping, drabbled women, who, conscious that they have a soul to be saved or lost, come in reckless despair or haggard indifference to hear the gospel preached, and to receive sufficient "daily bread" to keep that precious soul and misused body together for that day at least. Christian brothers and sisters administer the food, temporal and spiritual, rejoicing to watch the tear of penitence or gratitude in eyes long unused to weep—eyes, perhaps, of the returned convict, the thief, or the drunkard. Not that the congregation is wholly composed of the outcast or vagrant, though such preponderate. There is a sprinkling of those who have fallen into extremities by misfortune, and are so ill-clad as to dread to appear among the better dressed and more prosperous of their fellows. There is room and welcome for all; and numbers prove their appreciation of the benefits received by reappearing at the Bible classes or the evening services. To these other kindly hands are stretched out, and many have been raised from the stupor of despair to the awakening of hope.

A glance from the windows that surround this long and lofty apartment suffices to show whence the congregation and the schools come. It commands an extensive view of a portion of old London, and looks down upon streets, courts, alleys, crowded with poor; upon dens which are the lairs of thieves and murderers, and into which neither the light of the sun nor of the gospel penetrates. Below us are courts wholly occupied by thieves, where, it has been remarked, your pocket may be picked at one end and its contents offered you for sale at the other. It was here that Cruikshank and Dickens found the originals for Fagin the Jew and Bill Sykes, and it was in passing through one of them that the idea of the shoe-black brigade was suggested to the mind of its originators. Now, right opposite us, stands a large building, the home of that little army of rescued red-coated boys, who earn an honest living by blacking our boots, and form one of the many interesting features of philanthropic London. To these Refuges and Homes is due the salvation of millions of human beings, snatched from prison or self-destruction at some supreme moment, and helped into honesty and renewed life.

We have only to descend a story or two to prove the truth of this assertion. We reach the rooms devoted to the Industrial Schools.

Here are over a hundred boys and girls who have been taken from the dregs of the city, and saved when on the very verge of crime. Numbers have been brought in by the police, friendless, naked, homeless. Others rescued from cruel or drunken parents; a few from honest starvation. They have been certified by Government, and are, therefore, safe until they are sixteen, and in a condition for trade or service. They look so bright and happy that we are scarcely surprised to learn that in spite of the ever open doors none have wished or attempted to run away. There is one room full of juvenile tailors and another of shoemakers; and their masters, in either case, are able hands who have sought the male Refuge in time of dire need, and have been promoted to temporary work there upon proved good conduct. We enquire whether they like tailoring or learning best, and all reply unanimously, "Learning." One boy, busy at the machine, is reported a clever machinist, and is, we afterwards find, an equally skilful draughtsman, having passed the Government inspection for free-hand. Indeed, drawing is evidently a favourite amusement, for in the schoolroom we have at least a dozen copy-books thrust upon us, all containing free-hand drawings. One stunted little man, with an awkward gait and full, expressive hazel eyes, is especially anxious; he, with many others, having "passed." We are told that he has a marvellous memory; and he certainly looks something of a genius.

"They only draw out of school hours," says the master, half-apologetically, his hand on the child's head. "We find that it humanizes and interests. Some of them go in for geometry, also as a recreation. We have apprenticed one to ornamental engraving, and hope soon to apprentice another."

Let the sceptical fully understand that these "gutter children" are only taught the three R's as duty work, but that of their own choice they practise drawing, music, and geometry as an amusement. And who would deprive them of it? Certainly no one who watched their beaming faces at a word of praise, saw their painstaking efforts to rise from the mire, or listened to their sweet and pleasant singing to the accompaniment of a harmonium. Neither do they appear to be less efficient wood-choppers or carpenters for the cultivation of these tastes, to judge from work done in those departments. These juvenile tradesmen go far towards supplying the establishment with boots and shoes, coats and trousers, of their own manufacture.

Nor are the girls less industrious. We find sixty-two of them, varying in age from six to sixteen, busy at needlework. It would be impossible to trace in these healthy, bright, neatly-dressed children, the City Arab of the London deserts. Yet such they were not so long ago. Now a score of the elder ones are seated at a long table, making new Sunday frocks for themselves and the rest. The work is so strong and good that many a finished dressmaker might take pattern

from it. Running, stitching, piping, fixing, all equally neatly done. If only we could examine every piece of work held out for approval! Here are shirts with every gather so regularly struck that they would gladden the eyes of a needlewoman of the ante-and-anti-machinery school; and boys' socks, so tidily knitted that they would rejoice the heart of a Welshwoman. Articles of clothing of every kind and degree are in progress, and the least child has something to show; all praise to the patient instructress to whom the results are due, and who yet affirms that none of the sixty and two are intended for sempstresses, but all for domestic service. Indeed applications to this Servants' Training Home are always in excess of the supply. It is impossible to imagine that each member of this industrious, cheerful throng has been either plucked from the refuse of the world, or torn from the cold arms of starvation—blasted wild flowers, to which our conservatory has afforded culture and warmth.

One of the last so sheltered is especially, but privately, introduced to us: a big girl, who was brought to the Refuge last Christmas. She has an honest face and truthful eyes, and looks, in her neat frock and clean pinafore, as if she had always been respectable. Yet she came, wrapt in some sort of dirty blanket, her hair so matted and her person so defaced that she looked more like a wild animal than a human being. All that she knew of herself seemed to be that she was Irish, had lost both parents, and had lived with some old woman who made sacks. The woman was dead, and she was adrift on the tumultuous sea of London. Her language was defective, and she knew, literally, nothing. We asked her a few questions, to which she replied, with a slight stammer:

"My name is Emma Lane; I am fifteen. My father and mother are both dead. I have no one. Some of the others have friends. They may see them to-morrow."

Her eyes filled with tears as she spoke. We gave her a trifle, and said she would also find friends. Down came the tears like rain. It was well to see eyes so brimful of gratitude, for there are tears and tears; but there was no mistaking hers, and the more we warmed towards her, the faster they flowed. And as with her tears, so with her conduct. Her gratitude is such that she cannot do enough to serve the matron—cannot learn fast enough to please the governess. She is already beginning to read, write, and sew respectably, and her progress seems almost miraculous. She has, apparently, never been kindly treated before, and the quick Irish feelings, repressed for so many years, burst out like blossoms, beneath the sun of humanity.

When we reflect that each of the sixty-two smiling children before us has a history, more or less sad, of neglected infancy and degraded childhood, let us be thankful to the Almighty for putting it into the hearts of His people to provide Refuges such as this!

Leaving the schoolroom we are greeted by a sight to be witnessed nowhere else in London. Against the wall of a long passage and flight of stairs stand, single file, 220 children of all ages. They have just left the Ragged School, and are about to have their afternoon dinners. In the centre of a small room with two doors stands a deal table, on which is a tray containing a small mountain of provisions. One by one the little people enter, bag in hand, receive a large scoopfull of this broken meat, and pass out. They are so orderly that one only is reproved, and that is for bringing a dirty bag. As one hillock of food disappears, another and another succeeds, and on examination we find that it consists of a mixture of meat, potatoes, and gravy. It is exhausted at last, and all are not yet satisfied. Broken bread replaces the meat till every bag has been filled.

"The boys are served first one day, the girls the next," said the secretary. "We fetch the provisions daily from three City firms; they are the broken meat from a banquet of seven hundred people, being the remains of their warehouse dinners. On one occasion we extracted the meat, weighed it, and found there was over one hundred pounds. We think of having it all made into soup on the premises, by and by, in order to be sure that the children are fed by it. Another firm also sends us large quantities of pieces of material for our patching classes, which enable the poor women to manufacture decent patchwork garments out of their rags."

It is impossible to describe the workings of this Institution in one paper, therefore we can only pass rapidly through the airy dormitories and lavatories, where all that is needful is supplied for sleep and cleanliness; the large kitchen and bakery, in which one hundred good quartern loaves are baked; and the room where several young women are at their work, "biding their time" till places are procured for them. These have been welcomed here, when homeless, and being proved respectable are retained until provided for—saved from destitution, or worse.

It is equally impossible to see all the machinery in one day, since each day of the seven has its special work. Amongst other points of interest we miss the Band of Hope, with its eight hundred members, though we come in for the girls' sewing class. It is a busy scene, and composed of various elements. Ladies come weekly from a distance to teach the ragged children to make themselves respectable, and hundreds of little fingers ply the needle diligently, while as many tongues are ready to give you the history of their owners. All the fathers seem to be out of work, and all the mothers sick. The brothers and sisters are legion, and there is sure to be a baby. One volunteers the fact that she is a member of eleven, another of eight, and so on. Here is a blind girl, who yet likes to come; here a tiny sprite, with the pretty name of Angelina Zambra—she has the Italian face as well

as name, and is particularly neat; there a fair-haired girl, with a face so classical that you wish to take her picture.

"When I have made my pinafore I can buy it, either by tickets for good conduct, or farthings," said a ragged child proudly, while we watch a patient master receive the bits of pasteboard and small coins.

This is a farthing bank; there is a penny one as well. It is affecting to watch the pleasure and anxiety of the young faces as they invest their mites. Never had merchant more at heart the placing of his tens of thousands.

We linger among the busy throng until summoned to the Night Refuges. When the Institution was first formed these gave shelter, a board, rug, and piece of bread, to all who claimed them, and they were crowded nightly. They are now restricted to the homeless, but respectable; the workhouses being open to such as can give no account of themselves. But the Refuge is preferred to the casual ward, because the miserable guests can leave early in the morning in search of a day's work; whereas the Union demands hard labour until 11 A.M., in return for the roof and gruel. It is difficult, if not impossible, to find employment at that hour; and those who would thankfully work complain bitterly, because it is too late. Perhaps our law-makers might do wisely to see to this.

Here, however, the poor souls may leave early in search of employment, and return until they procure it, or it is procured for them. On the Sunday they may remain all day, receiving food for soul and body. In the words of the honorary secretary's report, "Homeless amidst myriads of houses, friendless amidst countless throngs, vainly seeking occupation in the busiest city in the world, what words can express the heart-sinking misery of the desolate wanderer, as in the darkness, and perhaps in the drenching rain, he rings the Refuge bell and craves admittance! The honest mechanic, the ruined tradesman, the broken-down professional man, the haggard sempstress—such as these have found the Refuge a house of mercy, and left it cheered and stimulated to fresh efforts, and inspired with new thoughts, new aims, new hopes, and new joys."

And a sprinkling of such we see to-night. Surrounding a deal table in a warm, if bare room, are, maybe, a score of women, destitute but not disreputable. One, a sempstress, has walked from Bath; another, a laundress, is reduced to the verge of starvation; a third, a young girl, has been turned adrift in Oxford, she says, for unjust suspicion of theft, is landed in London, and directed to this Refuge—a dark-eyed, handsome, thinly-clad girl, whose patent of honesty, for the night at least, is in the fact that she has roamed the streets until she has found respectable shelter! To-morrow her case, as well as the others, will be inquired into, registered, and attested. They are all meanly clothed, depressed, sorrowful-looking women, but with the appearance

of that honesty which they profess to have retained. And so of the men, some of whom, you see at a glance, have gone down in the world from misfortune or carelessness rather than crime.

We leave them, ready and thankful for their hard bed and meagre supper, trusting that all may, by God's mercy, be aided to rise from their destitution, like so many thousands of their predecessors, by the friends who have provided them a shelter, and praying that neither funds nor helpers may fail to carry on the good work of this Institution. We leave them and their quiet Refuge by one of the school doors, to find ourselves, at eight o'clock at night, in a wild Bedlam without. A crowd of noisy, inquisitive boys surround the door. Seated on high walls on either side, thick as crows in an elm tree, are scores of juvenile "roughs," intent on mischief. You wonder how the clamorous army got there. Children swarm on all sides. Whence can they all come? whither go? Numbers refuse to enter the school, yet cannot keep away; many are there to annoy the comers and goers; some to await the little sempstresses within. For these a night school is to be opened, in the hope that those who "come to scoff" may remain to learn, and be converted from evil to good. These are "The wild flowers of Field Lane."

EXILED.

No more thy face to see:
I sometimes idly wonder if it be
As present unto any as to me,—
A star for distance clearer!

Parted by land and tide:
In gleams that fade, in shadows that abide,
Along the mountain's ever-varying side,
Thy footstep draweth nearer.

The white snow falls in flakes
On glazing waters:—but thy memory makes
A home for me amid these alien lakes,
More warm as days grow drearer.

Say, dearest,—that for me
Art as a link uniting land and sea,
Time, distance, life and death,—can any be
That clasping,—hold thee nearer?

C. M. GEMMER (*Gerda Fay*).

MY FIRST BALL.

IT was a bitterly cold day, and the grey pony I was riding would not stand still. Both circumstances vexed me. The cold made my nose red; and it was not dignified, in the midst of delivering my mother's message about the butter, to find myself suddenly wheeled round to face Lady Fermor instead of the grocer. As for my nose, I don't think that would have troubled me much if the Hall carriage had not been in town—we always spoke of pretty, sleepy little A—, numbering some 1,500 inhabitants, as "town"—but it was the first time I had seen the Fermors, and I had reasons of my own for wishing to make a good impression.

Perhaps I was too impatient with him, or perhaps Beppo had submitted to as many delays as he could endure, for, finally he put down his head and went off into one of those fits of kicking to which I was well accustomed, and which signified very little when they took place in our paddock behind the house, but, to say the least, did not look pretty in High Street. Of course my hair came down, and a perfect hailstorm of hairpins made itself heard upon the pavement!

It was very provoking. Through all my efforts to bring Beppo to his senses, I fancied that I saw Miss Fermor smile. In desperation I gave the pony a stroke with my whip, which would, I knew, send him tearing down the street and out of sight in no time. Some such sensational exit from the scene would not look amiss; certainly it would be better than standing kicking at a shop door, trying, between the jerks, to gasp out a bargain for the butter, and all within ear-shot of the Fermors! However, just as my rebellious little steed made his forward plunge, a strong hand seized the bridle, and the sudden check threw me in an uncomfortable heap upon his neck. I recovered myself to hear Captain Fermor's half-laughing apology.

"I am afraid the remedy was worse than the disease," he said. "Your pony seems very troublesome."

Beppo was a little animal; so little that it almost seemed as though Captain Fermor could have lifted him off his feet with ease, had he been so minded. As for me, seated upright now, my head was so nearly on a level with that of my new acquaintance that the wind blew a great cloud of my hair into the Captain's face, and a perverse hairpin lodged itself in his buttonhole. At the same moment Simms the grocer, well used to Beppo's eccentricities, and by no means dismayed at them upon this occasion, reminded me that our business was yet unfinished.

"The *shop* price is thirteen pence, Miss Bessie; if we give that, where are our profits?" cried the mercenary man, anxiously.

"Allow me," said the Captain, detaching my hairpin from his coat and holding it out towards me, while once more the playful breeze caused my truant locks and his tawny whiskers to mingle in wild confusion; and I certainly heard a laugh proceed from the carriage, the cushions of which were brilliant with a heap of purple and scarlet stuffs exhibited by an obsequious shopman.

I did not resume my property. I left him standing there with the hairpin in his hand, and, regardless of an expostulating cry from Simms, "Say a shilling the pound, miss!" I gathered up my reins, gave Beppo his head, and galloped down the street at full speed, never slackening my pace until A— was far behind, and our own house visible from the brow of the last hill on the road home.

I pulled up then. Over the park palings there was a glimpse to be had of the lake, hard frozen—only the day before I had seen people skating there—and of the Hall itself, well placed upon the high ground beyond. My own home adjoined the park, to which hitherto I had always had free access; but the Fermors were come back, and doubtless things would be different now. Last winter I had had all the skating to myself, and secretly I was determined to have my share of it this winter also. My head had long been full of schemes for making Miss Fermor's acquaintance—a nice beginning this day's misfortunes were!

And then, the stupidity of Simms! They would take me for a farmer's daughter selling the produce of my mother's dairy. For that matter, the Oliphants were an older family than the Fermors themselves; and if we *were* poor—which it is true had been the case since my father's death—why, it was a great deal better *ton* nowadays to be poor than rich. And yet I sighed as I cast a last lingering look at the Hall, whose windows shone in the afternoon sun; for to be "rich" meant a big house, much skating, unlimited dinner parties and balls, whereat of course there would be many young men with tawny whiskers, all of whom would dance divinely. I was contented enough with things as they were; happy enough, Heaven knows; but then, I was seventeen, and had a feeling that the book was not ended, that the next chapter might be even more interesting than the last. I longed to turn the page; I fancied that life *must* have something in store for me, different—and of course better—than anything I had yet known.

The next day was Sunday. Miss Fermor drove her mother to church in a little phæton drawn by a pair of long-tailed ponies; Sir Anthony and the Captain came in together later, only just in time. After the service there was a moment's delay as we were going out; we were all in the porch together, my mother and I detained there during a discussion between Lady Fermor and her daughter as to who should drive the ponies home. It was Captain Fermor who first

noticed us, and called the ladies' attention to the fact that they were obstructing the public way.

"Mrs. Oliphant cannot pass," he said, and Lady Fermor turned instantly to apologise. Finally Sir Anthony took the reins, and Miss Fermor and her brother walked with us down the churchyard. I heard my mother say something about intending to leave her card at the Hall, and the young lady answer that such near neighbours should waive ceremony; she was dull, she said, and might not Miss Oliphant come back with her to the Hall then and there and stay to luncheon? Her brother had made acquaintance with her already.

"Miss Oliphant" walked behind with flaming cheeks, and thought of hairpins and butter, and such like recollections, but rejoiced withal that her end was attained.

The invitation to luncheon was accepted for me. At our own gate my mother parted from us, and I found myself actually walking through the park side by side with Miss Fermor. As for the Captain, he strode on in front, now and then calling over his shoulder. "Come on, Puck!" by which singular name his sister was known in her own family.

"Puck" was older than myself. A tall, handsome girl, whose deep mourning showed her dazzling complexion and fair hair to much advantage. Her manner was the least bit in the world patronizing, and the tone of her conversation a little flippant, which being something wholly new in my experience, I set down as brilliancy.

"We were so glad to see you alive after your sudden disappearance yesterday," she said. "I assure you Teddy stood gazing after you in a state of consternation. By the way, what a mercy you wear your own hair! Few girls could afford to sit your pony, I should think."

"Beppo is generally very good," said I, shyly glancing as I spoke at the exuberant tresses of my companion, and wondering what proportion of them was her own.

"I read your thoughts!" cried Miss Puck, laughing, "but false hair is no deception nowadays; everyone wears it. Teddy! Miss Oliphant is really refreshing—she is so unsophisticated as to be shocked at my chignon."

"Come on, Puck."

"Is there any society here?" questioned his sister. "Anything young—not as young as yourself; I don't expect that; I should imagine it hard to find your equal in youthfulness—but is there anything at all under sixty? Not that it matters much," she added, with a sigh, "for while we wear this horrible black we must keep so quiet, and as soon as possible of course we shall fill the house and be independent of the neighbourhood. Mourning is such a nuisance, don't you think so, Miss Bessie?—you see we have not forgotten the name; Simms called you Miss Bessie."

I answered, rather gravely, that everyone called me Miss Bessie, because my aunt was Miss Oliphant, and perhaps because I had lived here all my life and everyone knew me so well; as for the mourning, I thought it might be a nuisance unless—unless people cared, and then of course they would not want society.

"But I do want society, and I don't 'care' about my uncle's death. Though he was papa's brother, we hardly ever saw him; he chose to spend his life poking amongst poor people in the east—I don't mean Asia, my dear child, only the east of London. For my part I think it is hypocrisy to pretend to regret people you never knew, just because they are relations; and he quite dropped out of our set. When he caught some horrible fever down there in the back lanes, and died of it, how could I be sorry to lose him?"

"But that was noble! You ought to be proud of such a life, and such—" I had stood still in my amazement, but grew shy again and left my sentence unfinished. Miss Fermor finished it for me.

"And such a death, you mean. Oh, of course it was very noble, I am not denying that. I only say that *personally* I could not care about him. Teddy, Miss Oliphant thinks me a heathen, because I am candid enough to say my black is a bore."

"Come on, Puck."

On the whole I began to think the Captain rather rude, but when we reached the lake he grew sociable. I said how much I had enjoyed the skating here last winter, and the brother and sister instantly suggested coming down after luncheon to indulge in that amusement.

"It is Sunday," said I, half frightened to allude to the fact, but honestly believing that it had for the moment escaped their memories.

"We should scandalise the natives, you think," remarked the Captain; and the matter was compromised by a little sliding, over which we all grew friends. The sound of the luncheon-bell surprised us, and we hurried to the house, and into the dining-room at once.

Sir Anthony made me a stiff little bow, helped me to roast beef, and then forgot me; her ladyship was very civil and gracious; but it struck me that her son stared at me more than the usages of good society warranted. As the meal came to an end, Captain Fermor accounted for this breach of good manners.

"Was I wrong about the likeness, Puck?" he asked, leaning across the table to speak to his sister. "I beg your pardon for looking at you so much, Miss Oliphant, but we were so struck yesterday with your extraordinary likeness to that old picture hanging behind you, and I have been comparing the two faces."

I turned to look at it. Now, no one had ever told me that I was pretty; but if I resembled that portrait I must be more than pretty, I thought, for it was beautiful. I experienced a delicious sensation of gratified vanity, but all I *said* was:

"What an old-fashioned dress!"

"Exceedingly picturesque," remarked Lady Fermor; "and a good painting. It is a Sir Joshua."

"Sir Peter Lely," said the baronet, quickly.

"Ah, well, they are all one. What are you going to do this afternoon, Puck?"

"Miss Oliphant doesn't think it right to skate on Sunday, and it is too cold for a walk."

"Suppose we unearth the treasures in the gallery," said the Captain; "it might amuse Miss Bessie. Do you like old china, and pictures, and—and things?" he added, turning to me.

I stared at them, for of course I was going to church.

"Church?" exclaimed Captain Fermor, as if he had only just, for the first time in his life, heard of such a thing, and didn't quite know what it was.

"Again!" exclaimed his sister.

"Very right," said Lady Fermor, as she settled herself to her novel. Sir Anthony had disappeared.

Miss Fermor kissed me after I had tied my bonnet and had said good-bye. "You are a pretty little thing, Bessie," she said, "and as good as you are pretty. Isn't she, Teddy?"

Apparently Teddy agreed with her, for he insisted upon escorting me through the park.

Tom had come home that winter. The vicarage, where he lived in old days, was separated from us only by a few yards of road and by the churchyard, and if my childhood had not been a lonely one it was because Tom shared it. He did not live at the vicarage now. Six years before the old rector had died, and his son had gone to Canada. One dreary, never-to-be-forgotten morning, when the November sky was dark with clouds, I, a sorrowful child, had clasped my arms round his neck and wetted his cheek with my tears. Since then we had not even heard of him, until, also in November, in this year whose events I am recording, coming home one rainy afternoon, I saw—astounding sight!—a *hat* in our little entrance hall; and the conviction flashed upon me that "Tom had come back." I found him chatting with my mother, and—well, this time I omitted the embrace, glad as I was to see him—altered, older, more manly-looking, of course; altogether a different Tom from any I had ever pictured to myself, and yet so strangely the same Tom, and my dear old friend.

With his return, except that I was no longer a child, the old days seemed to have returned too. He was always with us; we walked, rode, skated together; but after the object of my ambition was attained, and we numbered the Fermors amongst our acquaintance, Tom's constant presence bored me. I preferred the society of Miss Puck—perhaps even of her brother. Not that I was much at the Hall. Miss Fermor

seemed to forget my existence for days together, and, indeed, only sent for me when no better company was to be had. The whole family treated me with a careless familiarity, which, had I been older or more learned in the world's ways, or less wilfully bent upon change of some sort, less discontented with the old simple life and the old simple pleasures, I might have resented; which Tom, and I think my mother too, secretly resented for me. As for me, I never doubted that, the obnoxious mourning once laid aside, and the house full of "their own set, which was to make them independent of the neighbourhood," I should be included in the gaiety to ensue. Visions of dances in the long gallery, of dinner-parties, charades, amateur theatricals, floated before my mind's eye; I listened eagerly when Miss Fermor imparted her London experiences. She liked a listener, and when no better audience was at hand, laid herself out to win the admiration of poor little me.

Thus it would sometimes happen that Tom, coming to the cottage to claim a promised walk, would find me absent; and though on such occasions he waited patiently, if on that day Miss Fermor had chosen to detain me, it would also happen that I was still seated in her boudoir, listening to her flippant chatter, long after my old friend had set out through the muddy lanes, in the gathering twilight, on his cold walk into A—, where he was lodging. I wonder what he thought of at such times; whether there was present with him the figure of the child who had clung to him, sobbing, six years before. He never complained when I threw him over—always kind, always the same, always jealous for me if he suspected neglect from others.

Towards Christmas, I heard that company was expected at the Hall.

"Only a few friends," said Miss Fermor; "just Lady Mary Bryde, and the Desboroughs, and one or two more." She ran over a list of names, all with handles to them, one sounding more fashionable than another to my inexperienced ears. We were in her own room, the bed and every chair covered with finery—delicate crêpe dresses, looking all the purer for their black accompaniments; soft grenadines; wreaths where tiny suspicions of mauve began to show amongst the sombre mourning tints. It was fast growing dusk, and I knew Tom was waiting for me; we were to have gone into A— together that afternoon to execute some commissions, I on Beppo, he walking by my side, as he had walked in the old times—oh! how often. It was the first expedition of the sort that had been planned between us since his return, and somehow Tom had seemed to look forward to it very much, and I had faithfully promised not to disappoint him. But in the morning there came one of Miss Fermor's imperious little notes, summoning me to luncheon with her, and of course I went, for we were not to start for A— until half-past two. My dear mother hesitated to let me go, but she rarely crossed my will or opposed any of my wishes.

"I have a strange feeling," she said at last, when the matter was decided, and I was wishing her good-bye; "a fancy that the choice lies before you to-day of the world or of happiness, and that you are choosing wrongly, Bessie."

"Poor Miss Fermor is not 'the world,'" I answered, laughing gaily as I kissed her; "and as for the alternative, a ride with Tom! do you call that 'happiness,' mother dear? Moreover, I choose *both*. I shall be back in time, never fear."

"I remember when a ride with Tom was one of your greatest pleasures."

"Ah, yes! when I was a child."

My mother looked at me wistfully.

"I almost wish you were a child now," she said with a sigh.

Looking back it strikes me that Miss Fermor only wished to make use of me upon that occasion. Certain it is that I did a good afternoon's work for her. Her maid had hurt her hand in some way, and we—Miss Puck and myself—were busy with the crêpe dress and the grenadines till it grew too dark to see; but once within the magic circle of the boudoir, I had felt no wish to leave her, and the short winter's day was fairly at an end when I reached home.

Looming through the December mist, Tom came to meet me at the gate.

"So late, dear Bessie, and so cold," he said. "They do not take care of you at the Hall; they should have sent you home in the carriage."

Going in, I was relieved to find that neither he nor my mother alluded to my broken promise. The fire threw a ruddy light over the little room, and as we drew round it, they both asked anxious questions tenderly. "Was I cold? were my feet wet? Was I sure I had not suffered from the damp air?" I hope that for the moment I felt the difference between their loving attention and the carelessness of my new friends. Perhaps I should have felt it more had not my head been full of the Fermors' expected guests, and of the absolute necessity of procuring a new dress in which to meet them.

At mention of the dress my mother's brow clouded.

"I wish I could afford it, my child," she said, "but this month's expenses have been heavy: and only on the *chance* of wearing it; *is* it worth while, Bessie? Your white muslin was new only in the summer."

"The *chance* of wearing it! why, *of course* I shall wear it," I exclaimed; and it was then that the A— ball came first into my head. Hitherto that festive scene had concerned me not at all. I was so young; had never been out; and, owing to my mother's failing health, our lives had been so quiet and so retired that I hardly knew any of our neighbours even by sight. But it suddenly appeared to me more dignified to pretend that, being seized with a violent wish to go to my

first ball, I required the dress for that, and only incidentally for the invitations which I might possibly receive to the Hall.

"The A— ball!" cried my mother, astonished, as she well might be. "Why, who could take you? And when you got there, who would dance with you?"

I answered both questions readily enough. Mrs. Mason, an old lady in A—, about the only person we ever visited, would chaperon me; and as for partners, Miss Fermor would introduce me to so many that I should have no lack of dancing—to say nothing of her brother, who would of course dance with me himself.

But my mother still shook her head over the dress. For once she was firm, and I had nothing for it but to submit. Tom, gazing dreamily into the glowing caverns in the grate, said something about my being young, and how natural it was for young girls to wish for finery; but no one answered him, and by-and-by he began to speak of his own affairs. He had been looking for an agency since he came home, and now, quite suddenly, the agent to Sir Anthony's property had died. Tom asked whether I should advise him to apply for the vacant post, and I, full of my own affairs, had scarcely patience enough to answer him. We had often discussed his future prospects together, and I repeated now what I had said before.

"Why must you be an agent at all? why not take land, and farm it for yourself?" Adding crossly: "Besides, if you *must* be any man's servant, I would, if I were you, go further away, and not serve a master here in my own neighbourhood."

He shook his head.

"My mind is quite made up as to an agency of some sort," he said. "The only question is whether to try for this particular one or not; and that is a question I should like you to decide, Bessie."

"But *why?* What does it matter to me?" I exclaimed impatiently. "And how can my advice be worth asking? Of course you have discussed it all with mamma. I can't imagine why you ask me at all."

"Can't you?" said Tom gravely—I thought he *was* strangely grave and a little unlike himself that evening, and set it down to annoyance at my broken promise. "Does your old friend's future really matter nothing at all to you? I am sorry."

This speech made me uncomfortable. I sat tapping the fender with my foot, and wishing he would go. Perhaps he read my thoughts, for almost immediately he rose to take his leave. I asked him carelessly whether our engagement should hold good for the following day; but, still holding my hand, Tom answered quietly:

"No; I will not victimize you; old friends cannot compete with new. God bless you, Bessie!" and so was gone.

I remember waking that night from a dream, in which I had lost

something; but, being awake, all my efforts failed to recall what my loss had been. The next day was dull and dreary; a cold blast sighed round the house; mist, and a drizzling rain that fell without intermission, hid the sombre wintry landscape. I sat with my old muslin spread out on the bed before me, and speculated sadly on how shabby it would look beside Miss Fermor's beautiful crêpe. My eyes filled with tears as I darned a hole, which was only too visible, in the front breadth; and as the wind moaned and the leafless trees bent and bowed before it, I was haunted by the recollection of my dream, and wondered *what* my loss had been.

At twelve o'clock the carrier from A— passed our door; he brought with him the commissions which I ought to have executed the day before, and he also brought a parcel for me. A parcel, addressed in Tom's handwriting, and containing a dress such as I had described overnight as being the object of my desires! He "hoped it would '*do*,'" he wrote, "and that Bessie would accept a present from her old friend; he was going away for a day or two, and before he came back he trusted the dress would be made—perhaps worn—and that Bessie would be happy in it, and keep one dance for him at the A— ball."

The prospect out of doors was cloudy still, but how changed was that within! It was such a relief, too, to find that Tom was not really offended. Poor fellow! perhaps he had been a little hurt that I had not shown more interest in his affairs. Next time we met I decided to talk about agencies as if they were the most engrossing of subjects; meantime I was as gay as I had before been dull. Nothing was forgotten in my parcel; ribbons, lace, even lining and other "extrays," as our village workwoman called them, were included in Tom's gift; and as I set to work, visions of the delights of the Hall cheered my labours. I was happy while making that dress; I had got my will; but in the midst of it all, even while my hands were busy over the soft folds of tarlatan, the delicate lace and flowers, I could not shake off the memory of my dream. From time to time I paused from my work to wonder what it could be that I had lost.

Tom came back the very day his present was finished; indeed, he caught me dressed up in it to exhibit myself to my mother, and they both pronounced the toilette a great success. But in the anticipation of many other partners I could not promise to keep a dance for him, when his coming to the ball at all was a little uncertain.

"I shall dance so much, you know," I explained; "how can I *keep* one for you? If you happen to find me disengaged, I shall be very glad; but indeed I couldn't wait for you." And I began practising my steps, waltzing round our little room, and thereby upsetting my mother's work-table; which accident sobered me for the time.

No wonder I was in high spirits. Had I not, that very afternoon, seen the carriages containing the expected guests pass our door on the way to the Hall? My dress was ready, and I had nothing to do but wait for Miss Puck's invitation, which doubtless would make its appearance on the next morning.

Oh! the impatient misery of the days that followed, for—no invitation came at all! My mother was very forbearing. Never once did she allude to the Fermors; she accepted my little fable, and feigned to believe that at the A— ball only had I ever expected to wear my beautiful dress; and of course I pretended the same thing; only, as the days slipped by one after another, and my lovely tarlatan was still wasting its freshness upon the bed in the spare room, I visited it from time to time, and many a tear of mortification fell perilously near to its unsullied folds.

I was doomed to greater mortifications still.

The evening of the ball came at last. Mrs. Mason had been invited to drink tea with us, and in due time I found myself seated by her side in the fly. Once started, my spirits began to rise, in spite of a few misgivings with which my mother's constantly repeated fear that I should be disappointed had infected me. Miss Fermor will be kind enough when she *sees* me, I argued to myself: it is always "out of sight, out of mind," with her. She will introduce me to everyone, and of course the Captain will be glad to dance with me. By the time we arrived I felt as confident as I had ever done of spending a pleasant evening; only I was rather sorry for poor Tom, and hoped he might come early, and stay late, so as to have a chance of securing one quadrille at least.

The fly stopped. We stumbled up the narrow staircase, and passed into the ladies' cloak-room, hung with pink and white calico, and where Mr. Duff the linendraper's young ladies were in attendance. As I shook out the skirts of my tarlatan the music struck up, and my heart beat fast. Possessing myself of a ball card—already, in imagination, inscribed with the names of future partners, Captain Fermor's name occurring there many times—I followed my chaperon into the tea-room. Here it was easy to distinguish those happy girls who were engaged, as they stood sipping the steaming beverage in conscious security of a partner; eager young men entered hastily, and bore them off, to the sound of a delicious valse; and in my impatience to be gone and to be dancing too, I scalded my throat with boiling tea, and after all had to wait until Mrs. Mason's leisurely enjoyment of her cup came to an end, and she and the doctor's wife, with whom we had joined company, moved slowly off together.

The first impression I was sensible of receiving as we stood in the doorway, detained by a knot of people collected there, was one of dust and—the orchestra occupying that corner—of overpowering

noise; but by-and-by, when we had pushed our way higher up the room, I saw the dancers clearly, and the noise melted once more into music. Glancing furtively round, I recognised few faces that I knew, and yet there seemed crowds of people present. I saw the apothecary's young man; I saw Mr. Duff and his daughters; even Simms, in a splendid waistcoat, was there; nearly all the townspeople dancing, apparently, with each other. I noticed distinguished-looking, well-dressed groups, and those I set down at once as guests at the Hall. Two or three of the county families were also present and had also brought guests; but the fine people danced as the tradesmen did—exclusively in their own "set," and by-and-by I grew to wonder where *my* set was, where *my* place in this gay throng.

But not at first. Dance succeeded dance, and though I still sat on the red bench, the flowers in my bouquet—Tom had sent it out from A— that morning—beginning to droop; my eyes aching with the light and the dust; my head throbbing painfully; I still hoped on. But Miss Fermor, floating past, gave a look of surprise when she caught sight of me, and then a careless nod by way of greeting, and so vanished all my dreams of the many partners to whom she was to have introduced me. As for the Captain, devoted all the evening to a handsome woman dressed in pink and wearing diamonds, he was utterly unconscious of my presence, until, during some moment of confusion in a quadrille which he was dancing exactly opposite to me, he suddenly backed into my lap and, turning round to apologise, shook hands.

"What! Miss Bessie!" he exclaimed. "I thought you did not patronise balls. Your first, I suppose. Not bad for a little place like A—. You are enjoying yourself immensely, I daresay." And as the quadrille came to an end, he offered his arm to his partner, and I watched them disappear into the tea-room. And with them Captain Fermor's name disappeared and faded out altogether from my tablets, still blank and unsullied as when, in imagination, I had filled them up at first. By this time I think I should have been glad if even little Fry the apothecary had asked me to dance: but then I had so often and so systematically snubbed little Fry, he would no more have dreamed of dancing with me than with Miss Fermor herself.

"Are you very much amused, my dear?" asked my chaperon. "Really it is a pretty sight, and it is pleasant to know who so many of the people are. Mrs. Dene has just pointed out to me Lady Mary Bryde—there, just opposite; that is Sir Hugh speaking to Lady Fermor; and how beautiful the Honourable Mrs. Lexborough is: black velvet, my dear, and such diamonds!"

Oh, yes; it was very amusing! I sat upright; I began to laugh and talk, to pass satirical remarks upon the company; to do my best to appear gay and animated, and as if all I had ever hoped from the

ball was to sit on a bench by Mrs. Mason and look at the Honourable Mrs. Lexborough's diamonds. And all the while, as Tom's flowers drooped and fainted in my hot hand, there was a great lump in my throat, and my heart ached with the bitterness of the disappointment. I fancied I sawMiss Fermor look at me, and addressed myself instantly with so much vivacity to the doctor, whose large expanse of white waistcoat just then deposited itself beside me, that the good man was fairly alarmed. I think in another moment I should have asked him to dance, but I caught sight suddenly of a familiar face in the doorway, the good honest face of Tom himself! My heart gave a great bound, and I stood up, not thinking what I was about; not thinking at all, only knowing that he could be coming nowhere but in my direction, and knowing that this time no disappointment was in store for me. He drew nearer as I rose. In another moment his arm was round my waist, and his kind voice in my ear, as we floated off amongst the dancers.

"That was good of you, Bessie! Better than your word, even, to keep a dance for me."

I did not answer him until we stopped, and then I contrived to say, although that horrid lump in my throat seemed almost to choke me, "It was not good, Tom. I have had no dancing. You and my mother were quite right. My fine new friends forgot me; and oh, I was so glad to see your face. If I have gained nothing else to-night, I have gained the knowledge that old friends are better than new. I beg you to forgive me, Tom. In old days you used to forgive me when I had been cross, and I have been very cross to you and very foolish this long time ——"

"Hush, Bessie! Hush, my darling!" he whispered. But I could not be silent. Even as his arm came round my waist again and we went on with the waltz, I cried, "Say that you forgive me, Tom!"

Flowers had been arranged in one of the balconies from which I had once seen our member harangue an electioneering mob, and the balcony itself was covered in and hung with red and white, but on that cold night, and owing to the many draughts about the place, the romantic retreat had tempted no one to enter. Tom and I defied the draughts. Leaving the waltz unfinished, we took refuge in the balcony, and there, amongst the flowers, Tom asked once again whether his future really mattered nothing at all to me. And this time I gave a different answer: for I knew at last that Tom's future and mine were to be the same.

EYE-BRIGHT.

"YOU see, Eye-bright, the Olivers are not going to ask you to their pic-nic to-morrow. It is not likely an invitation will come *now*. I greatly wonder at their behaviour, but, my dear, it is only what I have been expecting to happen a long time."

And Miss Belinda Elton: who was busying herself while she spoke in preparations for tea, within the little parlour of the Lock Cottage: frowned her bushy eyebrows, and felt that her feelings had been so wounded, that to ease her own mind of what was on it, she must have a spar at her niece's gentle, quiescent acceptance of the matter.

She was an elderly lady with strongly marked, almost masculine features, sharp, restless grey eyes that were never still except when closed in sleep or bent upon her needle. She was also the possessor of a quick, proud temper—under the least infringement of the etiquette or respect she had been accustomed to claim and receive from her equals or inferiors. From the day that Eye-bright had told her the Olivers were organising a pic-nic to Wayland Smith's Cave (a place made interesting by Sir Walter Scott in his romance of Kenilworth, and situated among the Berkshire downs), she had made up her mind that her dear little niece, whom she loved almost selfishly, and for whose happiness she was very zealous, would be invited. The Olivers had always been so studiously polite, and seemingly anxious to reconcile her to her present habitation, that not a doubt of their sincerity had crossed her mind; and with active pleasure she had set to work and prepared a pretty muslin for Eye-bright to wear on the auspicious occasion.

But Miss Belinda was sadly doomed to be disappointed. Every evening when Eye-bright came home from the Manor (a pleasant walk across the fields, where her duties called her as a daily governess to the younger members of Squire Oliver's family), her first words, almost of charming anxiety, were "Well, my love, have you been invited?" And Eye-bright would answer nonchalantly, "No, Aunt Linda, I have not." To-day the question had been put and answered for the last time, and Miss Belinda's recent comment on it remains the appendix to us.

Miss Belinda had so buoyed herself up with hope that her impatience had led her, before Eye-bright's return, to spend some time in watching and loitering at the window and door: a fidgety expectation, which had further induced her in the blazing heat of a July day to step across the lock and stand on the grassy slope that descended to the

towpath. There, shading her eyes with her hand, she scanned the marsh and the banks of the canal to see if anyone was coming who looked like a special messenger; sweeping down, with energetic little flounces of her bombazine dress, the scarlet poppies and clustering bed of bird's-foot trefoil that brightened the short dry grass. She was at length obliged to return to household duties that for once failed in curbing her exasperated feelings: feelings which had been rather more sensitively sharpened since the reverse of fortune had placed them in their present position.

Wednesday was a half-holiday for Eye-bright, and she had come in with a song upon her lips and a happy light in her eyes. To escape Miss Belinda's murmurs she had thrown aside her hat and jacket and sauntered out: so contriving her flitting that her aunt could not exactly accuse her of a disrespectful attention to what she was about to say. That say she was determined to have. While pouring out tea, and glancing up and down at her niece outside, she gave so novel a version of it, that it aroused Eye-bright's interest.

"The whole fact of the matter is this, my dear. They have grown jealous of you ever since my dear Sir Constable Beard came down here, and they found that he had known your dear papa so well, and us in our days of prosperity. Their love and friendship for you has been gradually cooling; I have marked it, known it, child; although you have never said a word. It is only human nature, my dear. Yet I thought Mrs. Oliver was a woman superior to the petty trifles of earth. Your eccentric notion of burying yourself in this poor cottage to please those people has been an injudicious step, and I deeply regret that I have sanctioned it so long by my presence. The damp of it is killing me; the isolation from neighbours is an open invitation to tramps and assassins to come across and rob and murder us. I do not intend to be snowed-up and ice-bound here another winter, my dear. I am going, and I shall take you with me. This romantic foolery must end, Eye-bright. Do you hear me?" concluded Miss Belinda, raising her voice into a comically high key.

Eye-bright had heard every word of the loudly-delivered discourse. Its sharp logical facts disturbed her while she stood dreaming in the chequered afternoon sunlight, on the terrace that ran before the Lock Cottage; leaning on the wall that was banded and crusted with lichen, and watching in the hollow basin the clear, flashing water-drops forcing through the floodgates, and turning down over the slippery stones in a mimic cascade. Something had "sweetly crept into the study of her imagination," and inclined the dimples to sink into the shy depths of her cheeks when Miss Belinda began; but they disappeared when she discovered that all this time she had been martyring the old lady. Now that the brooding truth was out, she must dispassionately consider the subject, and not allow the impetuosity of offended pride to hurry

them away into doing anything "foolish;" by which she meant a resignation of her situation, and an exit from the Lock Cottage. On no account would she suffer Miss Belinda's health to be injured by a residence there, if it really affected her; but beyond the colds that most people occasionally suffer from, she had looked upon Miss Belinda's health as robust. After all was it a romantic foolery, as Miss Belinda strongly worded it, for her to live and work as she was doing for people who had discovered themselves to be time-servers?

They had taken a great fancy to her; her solid accomplishments pleased them, and a charitable motive had actuated them to be kinder and more familiar than perhaps they might have been, had Mr. Oliver not been acquainted with her father, who had been the respected and well-connected vicar of a Surrey parish. The salary she received was liberal, and the situation had exactly suited her because it was in the country, and was that of a daily governess. Until now they had been very happy and comfortable, although the place might be a little lonely: but what of that? When the May flies rose and the fishing season began, when the yellow of the butter-cup, and celandine was emptied out over the marsh-meadows, and the cuckoo's sweet voice came over hill and dale, and the wild roses blew their foam-tinted petals over the hedges, and the forget-me-nots sprang up from muddy depths, there was life and activity all round them. So after all, she could not see that there had been anything so very eccentric or romantic in what she had done. The consideration of "ways and means" had been most fortunately sought and provided for in a far from disagreeable manner; and she did not consider herself obliged to see, and resent, the sudden whim that had possessed the Olivers, although she might wonder at it.

But Miss Belinda's shrewdness, hitting straight home to the mark, had rightly discovered that the inconstant change had arisen through no other source than Sir Constable Beard. He had come down to Holmby for the trout fishing, which caused the little town to be quite celebrated, and had immediately renewed his acquaintance with the Eltons, in whose former parish his home was situated. It was the most natural thing that it should be so, for Miss Belinda had always been a favourite friend of his, and Eye-bright his little pet ever since the time he had nursed her on his knee. The Manor people became assiduous in their attentions to the bachelor baronet, and as often as they could secure him he dined with them, and joined them at croquet. Several boating pic-nics had taken place which landed Mrs. Oliver and the girls in some reedy cove, where the angler was trapped on board to lunch, and constrained to idle away his time with Helen and Mabel, the two elder, and certainly beautiful daughters; but Eye-bright was never with them as she had been, neither did she then care to be. Yet her sweet, lovely face was often shaded by thoughtful preoccupation,

that deepened strangely into a sad wistfulness, a wistfulness which had not the slightest reference to Sir Constable.

Be it known that "Eye-bright," was the pet name of Mary Elton, and it exactly suited her. The large, mobile, hazel eyes were bright and beautiful, clear and soft. When she was very happy they sparkled and laughed in companionship with her sweet, dimpled mouth, a pretty little nose, clear white complexion, and brown hair, that from its wavy thickness shot rich burnished tints. This, combined with her soft playful manner and cultivated mind, made her a lovely little creature, a charming companion. Her amiable disposition was allied to that energy of character and simple common sense that kept her busy and cheerful in her present occupation.

The elasticity of her spirits had risen up at Miss Belinda's grievances, and she replied gaily :

"Oh, Aunt Linda, don't go on so! If I don't fret, why do you? You mustn't be cross with everything, because one pet scheme has miscarried. I assure you a holiday at home with you will be delightful. You have that charming book to finish reading to me, and in the evening we will go into Holmby and shop. Come, now, Auntie dear, revoke your regrets, and don't think of moving from here—for the present, at least. Indeed, I can't go ; I should not be happy anywhere else."

She turned round and faced the white-washed cottage that was partly covered by the straggling boughs of an apple tree, whose leaves tumbled over the walls and flapped against the glass windows. The droning of insects and the purring of her large tabby cat, that sat upon the wall winking idly at shoals of flies as they passed, broke the silence of the hour. Her slight, graceful figure, standing beside a cluster of white lilies, whose cool alabaster bells sent forth a sweet heavy perfume, contrasted with her morning dress, and formed a pretty picture. Her lovely face, flushed with the unwonted eagerness of her thoughts, somewhat softened Miss Belinda's asperity, for she had moved over to the window to catch Eye-bright's reply, and stood considering the smiling face and brilliant eyes.

"You are the strangest girl I ever knew, Eye-bright. To allow those people to monopolise Sir Constable and ignore us! Have you seen him to-day?"

"No, Aunt," Eye-bright replied, in a very casual tone. "I think he went with the Olivers to Dane's Court to call after the late party there."

"Hum! I suppose so. He really, I believe, admires Mabel Oliver. There will be a match there," Miss Belinda said, grimly smiling.

"It would be a good thing for Mabel—and for him. I sincerely hope it may be, Aunt." And Eye-bright laid a small caressing hand upon her cat, while she knocked down Miss Belinda's little castle in the

air. "Sir Constable is a dear fellow in his way, but I could never have fallen in love with him. He has not enough character for me: he is too effeminate. Mabel's childish flippancy is just the very thing he most admires. We are capital friends; nothing more. But, my dear Aunt Linda, I can't think what put that idea into your head and Mrs. Oliver's. It is perfectly ridiculous."

"If my idea has not been correct, my dear, I presume that your young and tender feelings have not sustained any affliction by seeing him transfer his attentions to another woman. I think you had better come in to tea."

Eye-bright obeyed the summons, and seated herself at the dainty tea-table with her back to the window, while she laughingly said, "Now, dear Auntie, that you know I am not heart-broken about Sir Constable, you must forgive the Olivers this absurd jealousy, and make up your cheerful old mind to stay here as long as ever we can."

"But, my dear, it grieves me to see you tramping through all weathers over to the Manor. We had much better go to London and purchase a day-school. I could get the money, child, if you will but agree."

Miss Belinda spoke with grave deliberation, still reluctant to recall the hasty words she had spoken in her pique.

"I don't know, Auntie, that it would be a good step," Eye-bright replied, after a thoughtful pause. "We have no rent to pay here, and our expenses are trifling compared with what they would be elsewhere. I think though, dear, you need a change. You have been two years here with me, and I have been dreadfully selfish; but my holiday will soon begin now, and we can go anywhere you like for two months. I should enjoy it so much. Shall we go, Aunt Linda? and where?"

The suggestion, meeting with Miss Belinda's ready approval, was fruitful of much pleasant discussion: and under the delightful prospect of a change nearer to the great world on whose edge Miss Belinda thought herself stranded, her good temper reasserted itself over her late annoyance.

II.

After tea Miss Belinda retired upstairs to her comfortable bedroom to indulge in a little epistolary correspondence. Eye-bright moved her low chair over to the window, where she sat in the shade cast by the apple boughs, for some time busily employed in correcting exercises. But by-and-by she raised her head, because a thought would creep in and distract her attention, and she had to give way to it before she could reconsider moods and tenses. The happy light in her eye, that had deluded Miss Belinda, appeared again, while her mouth smiled so bashfully that she was almost afraid to realise what it meant.

As she sat, she was not screened from the observation of a gentleman who had been for some time approaching the cottage by the towpath. His dark, distinguished-looking face grew warm, and his eyes softened tenderly, as he watched her bowed head and fair, preoccupied face. He was very tall, and slightly bent in his broad shoulders, and was decidedly a noble, strong, handsome man—one whom a woman might fearlessly trust. He cautiously crossed the lock, and with a spring reached the window, where his big shadow fell upon Eye-bright's sheets of paper. With a nervous start she raised her head, and as she saw him standing there, a sweet, sudden, womanly confusion almost overpowered her, and crimsoned her cheeks, while she strove to say, "Mr. Oliver, is it you?"

"Don't fancy it is my ghost, Miss Elton, for of course it isn't. How nervous you seem to have grown. See how those papers are tumbling out of your hands. Have I frightened you so very much?" he added, in a rich, pleasant voice, that, in its dear old familiar fun, restored Eye-bright's senses.

"Oh, no!" she replied, rising from her seat, while her heart throbbed almost to suffocation. "It is only the pleasant surprise of seeing you again. We did not expect you till to-morrow."

"I know it; but my impatience conquered my arrangements. I have come twenty-four hours sooner, to receive, I hope, a cordial welcome from you." He spoke with a little imperious smile, and a tender cadence that kindled up her wits.

With gentle grace she extended her small white hand, which he grasped and held in a firm, affectionate clasp, that thrilled her exquisitely, while he scrutinised her drooping eyelids and pink cheeks, remarking that the little hand still felt nervous, even in his.

"You look very well, Miss Elton; better than when I went away. I assure you your pale cheeks and brilliant eyes haunted me for weeks. I hope you have relaxed something of your severe discipline with those little ignoramuses; it wasn't good for you."

"It was good for me to be thoroughly interested in my work; it did me no harm," she replied, feeling almost bewitched by his kind voice; thinking how that going away had blanched her cheek and made her eyes feverish with regret; how in silence she had lived, clinging to the hope of his return.

"You are quite as opinionated as ever, I see, using that gentle tyranny that subjugates all your pupils: remember, I am one of them. I hope you have not forgotten those happy hours last winter when I was laid up, and you used to cheer my weariness by reading and singing to me?" he said softly.

"No, I have not forgotten it; I was very glad to be able to amuse you; anything I could do for you eased the burden on my conscience. Are you quite well now?" she asked, with more than common interest.

"You must look and judge for yourself, Eye-bright. You have grown strangely shy and fearful of me. Come, show me again those eyes whose bright light has shone over the darkness of my life."

Eye-bright felt so foolishly happy that a sweet little laugh responded to his words; and overcoming her timidity, she gratified him by a modest little study.

"Well, and what do you think of me now," he said, laughing, and pressing her hand. Her dimples began to play.

"I think you look very much tanned by your southern residence, Mr. Oliver. Did you go to the Alhambra?"

"Yes, and selfishly sighed for your companionship there. We should have enjoyed the Moorish remains much better together, I am sure." His dark eyes lit up wonderfully with the sincerity of his wish.

Eye-bright playfully thanked him, and asked him to come in.

"That is a hint that you want your hand back, I suppose," he laughed. "That tender, skilful little hand that looked after my broken collar-bone when I was thrown. I wish you would give it to me, Eye-bright; I should take better care of it than you—see how you have inked it!" and Mr. Oliver playfully pointed to the black stains where her pen had rested. "I have come home post-haste to ask you that favour. Don't wrench at it so, you won't get it; you would only cover up your face, and I must see a great deal of that dear face."

Covered with blushes and the sudden emotion caused by his words, it was never more lovely and fascinating, and with a sparkling eye she said, "Do you know somebody else might be in here?"

"Eye-bright, don't try to deceive me. I've been peeping into the room all this time. You are just like a ripple, you try to hide yourself, and fail; you must flash out sometimes. But how is your aunt?"

"She is quite well, and upstairs. I will call her; she will be pleased to see you—if you would only give me my hand," Eye-bright pleaded.

"Don't disturb her now on any account; I forbid it. Abandon those wretched papers, and come out; the sunset is glorious. On that condition I will lend you your hand. Do you agree?"

So it came to pass that presently she was by his side on the terrace. Then they crossed the lock and went down on the bank of the canal, where they walked in close and blissful delight, such as mortals have been permitted to enjoy on earth.

Philip Oliver was the younger brother of Squire Oliver of the Manor, and he had formed an attachment for Eye-bright ever since he had known her; an attachment that appeared to have been perfectly mutual, though undeclared till now. He did not live at the Manor. His own "Home Farm," as he styled his property, was about three miles away from the Manor, but much of his time was spent in his brother's cheerful house, and there he had met Eye-bright. Her

beauty and worth had interested him, and desperately in love did he fall with her, with little or no encouragement from her: so that the current ran swift and deep, and yet unobserved. An accidental fall from his hunter had occurred, through Eye-bright's suddenly springing off a stile one day just as he was passing on his way to the meet, and frightening the animal, throwing him so violently that he had broken his collar-bone almost at her very feet. The agony of the moment had been terrible to her. She gently cradled his head upon her lap till his groom galloped to Holmby for a surgeon, then to the Manor for assistance to convey him there, where for some time he was kept and petted as a loved invalid, and where Eye-bright's services were made useful in amusing "Uncle Philip," and staying with him when Mrs. Oliver and her elder daughters were going out. Kind Mrs. Oliver! Purblind to any suspicion of Philip's doing anything so foolish as falling in love, she completely trusted these two people, whose friendship developed itself in the delightful communion of two hearts formed for each other. Little did she think, when she slighted Eye-bright on account of Sir Constable, that a stranger mischief had been worked.

"I wonder what notice my sister-in-law requires, Eye-bright, in resigning your situation?" he asked, bending down his laughing eyes upon her, and reclaiming the hand, which he drew through his arm. Startling her again to the inevitable, and causing her to consider diligently the glorious sunset that was paving the water with slabs of ruby and amethyst, under which the light-green water-grasses floated and sank among blue shadows. The waving sheaths of the flags, stirred by the wind, rustled crisply, and about their dark-green roots were pillows of white and rosy clouds tempting her to look, if Mr. Oliver would only have given her time. But he would not; he preferred to see the glow on her own sweet face, and he teased her till she replied, almost breathlessly, "I don't know."

"Immediate notice ought to be accepted; but it won't, I suppose. I shall manage it for you, my darling, never fear. Only tell me that I have not been too presumptuous—that I have not been idly dreaming."

Soft as the passing wind came the whisper: "I don't think you have been idly dreaming, Philip."

Almost reverently he kissed her modest lips, as he said, with heart at rest, "We had better go back, then, and tell Miss Belinda all about it."

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The Argosy

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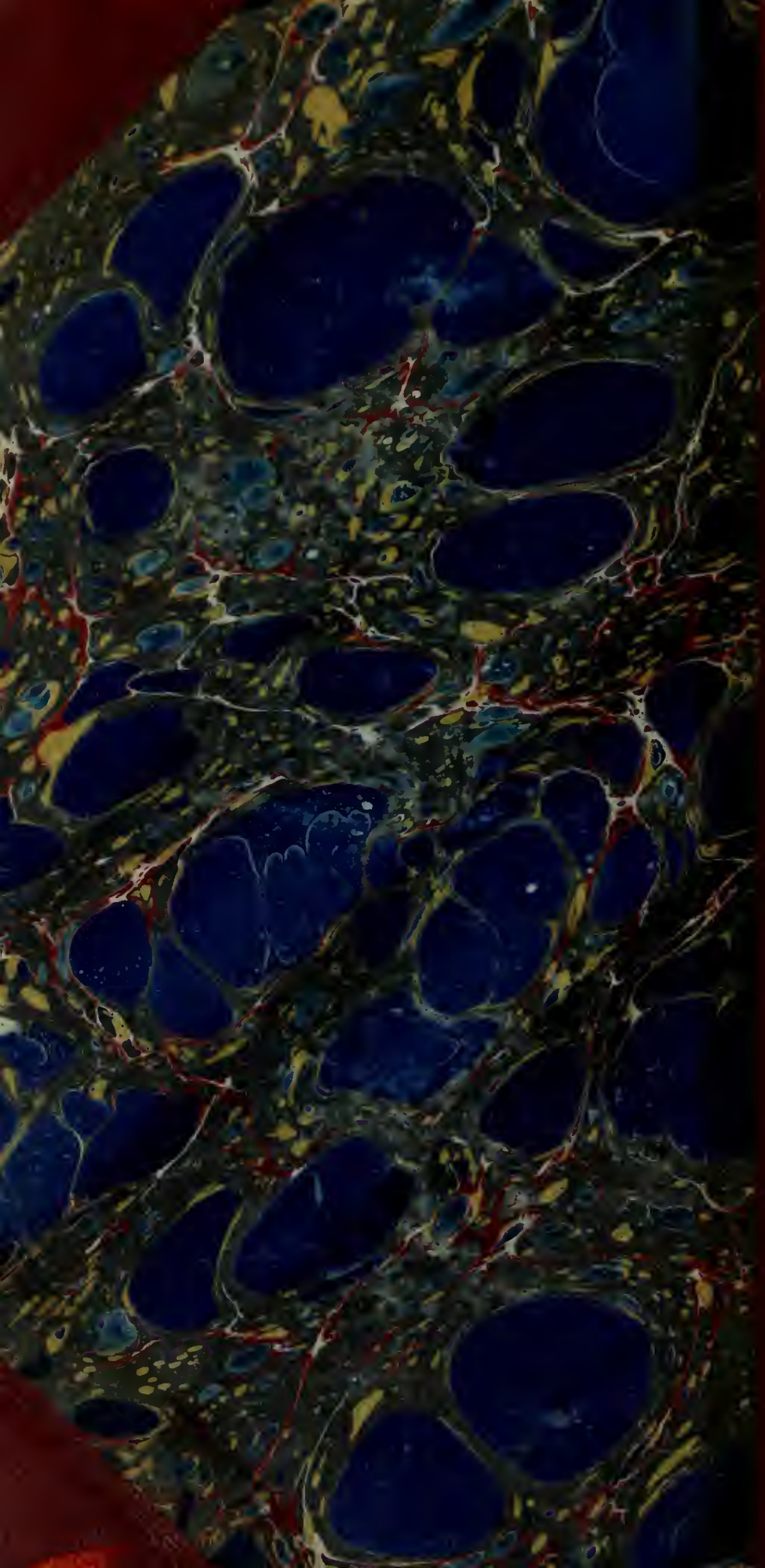
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